



Monica Radomiljac

The Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport,
PO Box 6100,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Thursday, August 06, 2009

Re: Youth Allowance

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to make the following submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Group on in relation to proposed changes to Youth Allowance.

The impact of the new Youth Allowance eligibility criteria on my children as students from a regional area will be devastating.

We live in Pemberton approx 400Kms south of Perth in WA

My children attend Manjimup Senior High School, the only Senior High School in the inland corridor of the Warren Blackwood Education District. It has a current student population of 670 students (As at Census 13/02/2009) with an SEI of 97.17, placing the school in the second lowest SEI band; indicating that students do not come from an affluent background.

Manjimup Senior High School has attained outstanding results in Tertiary Entrance courses over the past 10 years and has consistently ranked as the

highest achieving Country Public School for students achieving a scaled score above 75% and for the number of students finishing in the top third of the state in Secondary TEE League Tables.

The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance Scheme have the capacity to have a significant effect on the students wishing to study at Tertiary level.

The short term impact of the proposed changes will most certainly be felt by my son Tyler, who completed his Tertiary Entrance studies in 2008. He has qualified to study Engineering at the University of WA and has been forced by financial necessity to defer in order to earn money to finance his way through University by qualifying for the Youth Allowance Scheme. This decision was made in good faith and with the current information available. I believe that Tyler will be severely and unfairly disadvantaged by the proposed Youth Allowance changes. He may not be able to start his course next year and he will be devastated after studying hard, working hard and dreaming of going to Uni since he was a small child.

The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance pose the prospect of a substantial impact upon the family finances. We are involved in the vegetable, meat cattle and wine grape industry and with contracts disappearing and beef, vegetable and wine grape prices falling we would not be able to support Tyler to study at University.

Without Youth Allowance we face an increased financial burden, with the prospect of being forced maintain an additional residence in the city. To board at a residential college on campus will cost about \$12,000 per year, to maintain a residence for Tyler will involve rent, up to \$10,000 with electricity, food, and telephone etc, all on top of this. Tyler will also need to learn how to use public transport, to find medical and dental services prepared to accept him when he has emergencies, he will need to look out for himself if he is ever sick...he will need to cook and shop and clean for himself, if he does not do his washing he will have no clean clothes... he will be living in a strange town and with out youth allowance he will also have to find time to seek a part time job to pay for his rent, food, books and university memberships all while learning to study in a new and challenging environment

Country students and their families are clearly disadvantaged and the Youth Allowance in its current form is a mechanism that assists to redress this disadvantage. Students from rural areas not only suffer from financial disadvantage when they relocate to pursue further education and training, they also have less support structures and less access to facilities which are afforded to their metropolitan counterparts.

Tyler has a cousin the same age as him, they were born within weeks of each other, who lives and went to school in Perth. She has gone straight to University and it costs her family no more than when she was at school. She sleeps in the same room, uses the same food, power, rates etc as the rest of the family, she simply catches the bus to Uni instead of to school. She has a part time job to fund her entertainment expenses while her mother still cooks and cleans for her, takes her to the doctor when needed and cares for her when she is sick or has other emergencies such as traffic accidents... Tyler will be on his own no matter what happens to him, his family will be five hour away.....it seems a hugely unfair impost for an enthusiastic and ambitious young man to take away the financial support he needs.

Youth Allowance with the old eligibility requirements was the life line for us and many other rural families to be able to afford university education for their children. We strongly urge you to review the new eligibility requirements for Youth Allowance to enable equitable participation of rural students in tertiary education.

Yours sincerely and with thanks for your consideration

Monica Radomiljac