

**Submission on Behalf of Manjimup Senior High School – School Council**

To Whom it May Concern.

The Manjimup Senior High School Council would like to place a makes the following submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Group on behalf of the Manjimup SHS community in relation to proposed changes to Youth Allowance. The impact of the new Youth Allowance eligibility criteria Scheme and its impact on students and families in the Manjimup school community was been an issues that has been raised as a concern at Council meetings on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2009 even before the proposed changes were released to the media.

Manjimup Senior High School is situated approximately 32300 kilometres South West of Perth and is 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 bound 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. Hence The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance Scheme has the capacity to have a significant effect on both the students studying Tertiary bound subjects and this key focus area at the school which has had considerable resources allocated to it.

The short term impact of the proposed changes will most certainly be felt by students who completed their Tertiary Entrance studies in 2008. All 41 students in this cohort, who participated in 4 or more full Tertiary Entrance courses, were successful in being offered University places with Manjimup SHS being the 1<sup>st</sup> ranked school in the state for highest percentage (87.8%) of students gaining their first choice of University course. Of these 41 students 33 decided to defer or take a gap year in order to earn money to finance themselves through University and/or qualify for the Youth Allowance Scheme. Many of these students were forced to defer due to financial circumstances. These students made these decisions in good faith and with the current information available to them. We believe that this group of students willould be severely and unfairly disadvantaged by the proposed Youth Allowance changes.

The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance poses the prospect of a substantial impact upon the Manjimup Community. Without Youth Allowance

families face an increased financial burden, with the prospect of being forced to relocate to the metropolitan area in order to give their children the opportunity to participate in University studies. Many families in the Manjimup region will not be able to maintain the runningongoing costs of two residences, particularly in tough economic times. There is the real likelihood of students, who may be eligible to study at University but will not take up for go this option because of the financial impact as it is not financially viable for on them or and their families. 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..

In the long term there are also the possibility of significant impact on students and the curriculum offerings at Manjimup Senior High School. If a critical mass of students make the decision do not wish to study Tertiary bound subjects, a possibility considering they may not have the financial means to further their studies once they have completed their Secondary Education, then this pathway may not be viable to run. Future students wishing to study a Tertiary pathway may be forced to transfer to do this on another regional or metropolitan centre (at least 125 kilometres away), which would once again see people moving out of the Manjimup community.

Youth Allowance with the old eligibility requirements was the life line for many 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.

Remo Pessotto

President - Manjimup Senior High School : School Council