

To the Hon. Julia Gillard and the Hon. Chris Bowen,

I write with reference to the proposed changes in the current budget to Youth Allowance in regards to School Leavers entering their tertiary stage of Education.

My daughter completed her Year 12 schooling in 2008 , and is currently working toward earning her \$19500 dollars - a considerable sum for a 16 year old girl, who is isolated by her location (we live in Denmark WA - 500kms from Perth and also 20kms from the township), at 16 my daughter has not yet received her drivers license - and is also eligible for a wage of \$12.50 per hour .

Currently she has worked on average 20 hours a week at two jobs, as of this week she is trying to increase to the thirty hours by obtaining a third position, but you are proposing changing the rules half way through her Gap Year - is this fair?

I would ask you to consider the following points that effect Country residents when considering the proposed changes to Youth Allowance:

1. To achieve 18 months at 30 hours per week, a student must defer for 2 years.
2. To achieve 30 hours per week in country areas, can be difficult for a qualified adult let alone a school leaver with no skills.
3. When a student leaves home - hours away from their family home - what are they if not independent?
4. The costs of sending a child to University when they effectively need to set up a home, rent, bills, food, transport are prohibitive even for an income that is above the Youth Allowance eligibility. The costs run into the tens of thousands, how is a family expected to send multiple children away.
5. If I lived in the city it would be as if I was having my child in school for a few more years and would not be an issue - in the country the financial impacts are far greater.

6. Many country children do not complete university because the emotional and social pressures they face from not being at home for the first time, a city life varies greatly from the country, the speed of life is faster, the types of people are more varied - it is an overwhelming time for them, not forgetting temptation of the night life etc., why are we adding financial difficulties making the problems even greater for these children?

7. In order to be able to go to University from the country it seems that you must do a full time study load and also a full time job in order to survive - is this really possible or will we be wasting the resources of Universities by having students drop out after a semester or two.

8. Country children need to be afforded the same opportunities as city children - though we aren't able to provide them with the support and daily comfort of their families - clean house, clean clothes, warm food, during their study years we can at least afford them the ability not to add to the stressful time of their lives with concerns of money worries.

I propose that children that can exhibit a life lived in the country with no familial support at the University, that have no option other than to leave the home should also be considered as an independent, therefore eligible for full living away from home financial support.