

Submission to - Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

I as well as thousands of 2008 Graduates and many of my friends have chosen to take a gap year for 2009, to earn much needed money for university and to participate in the governments \$18,00 in 18 months scheme. This would qualify me as an independent in order to gain Youth Allowance, which would take enormous financial pressure off my parents. But I have been blindsided by the Labor party's new budget and the scheme has been ripped from under me without warning. Now I and my parents (who are hardly affluent) face an uncertain financial situation when i leave for uni next year, I am a country kid who won't be living with my parents next year and will be at least 2 hours from home. It is disappointing that the Government isn't even giving us a chance to prepare ourselves for these new changes, otherwise many students would preferred to have gone straight to university.

I want to become a mechanical engineer, a skill that there is currently a shortage of, the government has been desperate to increase engineering numbers across the country and has provided extra funding for universities in order to achieve this. So this proposed policy seems contradictory to me. If Kevin Rudd is trying to get more people into tertiary education then why implement this? Why give extra funding while taking more away at the same time?

For many kids it is a necessity to take a gap year, and soon it will stretch out into 2 years, universities cannot defer a placement for this long so how can new scheme work? Further still after 2 years a school leavers interest in their chosen course would wane and the appeal of a full-time income would become more and more appealing to them. It is also a long period of time for a school leaver to be without education, they would start to lose all the precious knowledge of their high school studies as well as study habits, which would cumulatively produce a very difficult first year. Country kids want to educate themselves which is what the government wants, yet the support to undertake tertiary studies is being taken away.

This is a huge kick in the guts to country kids from middle income families.

Lee Rogers