

To whom it may concern,

As the parent of a university student who took a gap year in 2008 and now receives Centrelink, I am well aware of the financial help this offers for regional students who have no choice but to move away from home to study. I also have another child who has just started his HSC year and who also intends to move away from home to study. The courses are not available at any locally available university.

The changes to the Youth Allowance independence test mean that instead of earning approximately \$18 500 over 18 months, my son must now find a job that offers 30 hours of work per week for 18 months. This in a town where the economy is tourism based and employment is highly seasonal is highly unlikely.

While I agree with the intent of the government to 'tighten up' the eligibility criteria, in particular to reduce the access to allowance of city-based students living at home, inner-regional students have been caught in the middle.

Unlike metropolitan students who can reside with their families if they choose, inner-regional students must move out of home, incurring high costs for accommodation, travel and relocation costs as well as day to day expenses to survive.

If my son is not able to attain youth allowance, we would have to find approximately and extra \$400 per week to support his expenses, let alone offering any additional financial support to our daughter as the current youth allowance & rent subsidy barely covers her accommodation costs.

The other factor that didn't seem to be considered by the most recent changes to the youth allowance policy is that many universities do not allow students to defer their offers of placement for more than a year. To take the 18 months required to work for youth allowance, a deferral of two years is required meaning students could lose their position in the course they had worked so hard to get into.

Please explain to me WHY our children from inner regional areas should be disadvantaged.

A very concerned parent of a current & future uni student from an inner-region area of NSW.