

Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

To whom it may concern,

I have one major concern regarding the qualification criteria for youth allowance, which is that the criterion discriminates against students who live in inner rural areas.

My wife and I live in the rural city of Mount Gambier, South Australia which is 450kms away from either state capital city where my daughters can attend university.

My eldest daughter, finishing high school in 2008, qualified for youth allowance under the old system. She had a gap year and worked very hard to earn the \$19,532 that was required. A job that required her to work shifts in the horticultural industry and one that required an 80 kilometer round trip from her home.

Even with her youth allowance payments we are still required to help fund her accommodation with regular fortnightly payments.

My second daughter has just finished her year 12 exams and is awaiting her results. Her dream is to study to become a Chiropractor in 2012 after having a gap year in order to get some money behind her before heading off to University in Melbourne, Sydney or Perth as these are the only places offering this course. This surely will be a clear demonstration of her independence.

Because of the type of hospital Mount Gambier has, through the Australian Standard geographical Classification (ASGC) we are classed as an inner rural city. This means to qualify for youth allowance my daughter will be required to work 30 a week for 18 months in a 2 year period.

Here lie some problems.

1. The universities will only let a student defer for 1 year.
2. That it is unreasonable to expect a Student to work 30 hours per week while attending and studying at University. They would have to do this for their first full year to qualify for youth allowance.

As responsible parents we were told by the principal that our daughters should not work any more than 10 hours per week while studying for year 12 as their results would be effected by increased hours of work. Students from inner rural cities are going to be asked to do 3 times that in their first year of study so that they can qualify for youth allowance. It is well known and understood that the first year of a university course is a make or break year, a year in which the study program is demanding and sorts out those

who are able to adjust and knuckle down. The current discussion as I have described will make this all the more challenging and for those without home support it will make it extremely testing.

3. It will be extremely difficult for my wife and I to assist both our first daughter plus fully supporting our second daughter to be away at university. The cost of having a student from the country at university is somewhere between \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year. It is unreasonable to expect a student to work 30 hours a week while studying full time. So we will be required to support her to the amount \$55,000 to \$70,000 until she turns 22 where she will qualify for Independent Living allowance.

To think that if we lived on the other side of the road, as many of my daughter's friends do, we would still be 450kms away from Adelaide or Melbourne, our daughters would still have to leave home to study, my youngest daughter would not be discriminated against because of the status of our hospital in our community and she would get youth allowance like her friends will.

This is unfair.

Please look at the qualifying criteria and make changes so it is fair for all students who will have to leave home to study. They can not go home each night, they lose all family support and they should be deemed independent which should qualify them for youth allowance.

Regards  
Morris Dickins