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Submission to Senate Rural and Regional Affairs References Committee
for a hearing into
Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education
Opportunities

2 September 2009
Twin Towns Ex-Services Club, Tweed Heads.

TweedgoldcoastRs Association Inc
Campus association for Southern Cross University
Tweed Gold Coast Campus.

The comments listed below are a further contribution from staff and students of Southern Cross University to the above inquiry.

I wish it to be noted that at the time of the inquiry I was president of the TweedgoldcoastRs Association Inc., of Southern Cross University, and as such presented the initial submission. I no longer hold that position, but have gathered the following comments as requested by the Senate committee.

Yours sincerely

Geraldine O'Flynn

I currently receive youth allowance and I think that yes students should be eligible 4 youth allowance regardless.. I know that one of the conditions that I knew of when I applied for youth allowance was that to be an independent I had to live more than 40mins away from home... its not worth moving out of home if you only live 10mins away because you are not classed as an independent even though you really are totally independent

I am a full time student who lives away from home. I don't claim any centrelink. I found it is worth my while to work 30 to 35 hours a week rather than get youth allowance. My grades are generally not very high because I don't have the time to dedicate to my studies. Also paying rent, food, car expenses and attempting to have a social life is impossible. It would be so much better if youth allowance was more flexible in helping students.

I think its a great idea, but are international students eligible for it?

I think this is a great way to approach youth allowance. I had to move from Tamworth to the Gold Coast for uni and have been struggling financially ever since. I was on Youth Allowance for the first few months but because I had a part time job, once I'd worked over about 10 hours my payments were cut right down meaning I didn't receive enough Allowance to supplement my wage to live off. Therefore I had to work an average of 30 hours in order to pay rent and be able to afford other living expenses. Which in turn meant that I wasn't eligible for Youth Allowance, the extra hours at work meant that time was taken away from my studies. I am just exceptionally lucky that my Parents can afford to help me out if I ever get stuck, I'm sure there are people in similar situations that don't have that luxury. Here's hoping the government listen to what we have to say!

I feel that I will be stating the obvious.

People who don't "need" something that's given to them, typically expect more & respect it less. If you get a "bonus", you spend it on stuff that's not important. I've been a young person, I've had 2 young people (now young adults) and I've watched many of them. Extra money goes on drugs, alcohol, entertainment. Not all, of course, but the more financially better off a young person is, the less they seem to value the money.

If the families can afford to provide education & accommodation for their kids, I feel that the families should pay.

I know that being a student means purse-strings get tightened, but the tightening made me appreciate what I had, and made me value any extra that came in. I have a friend who's laughing because they are financially well off and have paid their children's HECS debts up front, and this enabled them to receive a substantial reduction in the overall cost (25%?). If their children were also entitled to a living away from home allowance, it puts them so much ahead of others who need to work to supplement their allowance to pay for food, books etc, that an enormous difference in values occurs, as well as expectations, not only in the academic world, but also in a social environment.

I appreciate that a person living away from home becomes dependent on the parents for support, and so answerable for actions & expenses etc, but the kids from low income families are dependent on tax payers, so until they are all financially independent I believe they need to be accountable to someone. If the higher-income families had the bonus of living away from home allowances, it would create an even more obvious class distinction, which may affect self-esteem, confidence etc, and this could impact on academic results.

I'm glad this is not an assignment (I'm on a short lunch break). I don't think I Englished it very well!

Regards

I agree that all students required to live away from home (if they have one and not already displaced) should be fully entitled to ausstudy..

In addition, it should be no less than Newstart (dole) allowance, as the individual is able to further contribute to society with additional skills and education, more than unskilled labor.

the Current Payments do not cover the average minimum requirements for accommodation, food and transport.. in addition the cost of text books..

This is compounded by the requirements of 'full time' courses, and expectation for students to gain further employment to meet these cost. (most of which is cash in hand, as industry takes advantage of poor students and places students at risk.)

The situation is unacceptable.. especially when industry placements are also a requirement of the course in question. Eg. Full time study, secondary employment and internship requirements.

Eg I could not afford car registration, nutritional food, basic medical cost, transport to attend internships and basic low cost entertainment (to manage the stress and psychological barriers of full-time study) I refer to Maslow hierarchy of needs for an individual.

Students, especially mature age are poorly treated. Its an absolute disgrace.

In addition Most university students fall with in a demographic that is the highest risk of suicide... and it is common knowledge financial stress is a key motivator behind preventable suicide in Australia.

As a current student on Youth Allowance, I strongly agree with the Victorian government 'that all students living away from home should be granted, Youth Allowance' as without the assistance of the fortnightly income I receive I would be unable to study any degree of university work load that is asked when studying full time. Youth Allowance allows me to concentrate my time on study and gain the strategic advantage I need to complete university with credit or higher.

The income has helped me on the basic needs of groceries, petrol, internet, text books and other related expensive to university life.

I hope the Australian government can help more students with Youth Allowance, as in the future those students will be replacing the working class with a higher education level and therefore playing a major role in the future of Australia's economic success.
