

To whom it may concern

I already have a son who attends Curtin University (Guild Member) and a daughter whom is hoping to attend Curtin in 2011. Because they are rural/regional students they have and will need to face much financial and emotional hardships to relocate from country WA to attend their nearest education facility which provide the courses of choice for their career choice.

It is unfortunate that the public was only notified yesterday of the Senate Inquiry to the Reforms for Youth Allowance for Regional/Rural Students, which I might add commenced yesterday, and hence this has given no opportunity for many county representatives to have a say.

The government's current reforms to the Youth Allowance is **discriminatory against the majority of all 'current' rural and regional students.**

The Government has backtracked on introducing these reforms for 'year 2008' students, but have *not* considered that there are also many *2009 current students* who had also based their plans on being able to access Youth Allowance by taking a working gap year through 2010. It takes many years to be able to plan and save to relocate the required 200km (as in our case) to attend the nearest suitable educational facility offering the course of choice.

The government is **discriminating** against rural and regional students by *not* offering the **same educational facilities as city students.** If the government can't provide equal educational facilities that city students currently enjoy, then the least the government can do is provide some assistance to help with their living away expenses. City Students already have easy access to university, yet without the same emotional/mental and financial hardships that we country kids face. Aside from the financial hardship, the other obstacles would include being vulnerable, isolated, homesick, responsible for own health, dealing with problems alone, paying bills (eg rent/elect/water/gas), cooking, cleaning and being accountable to landlords. And to prove how difficult it is, universities already recognise that there is a high proportion of 'country kids' who 'drop out' in those early years because of these hardships!!

It would also be unfair for the Government to enforce 18+ age group students to be dependent and 'tied to the financial apron strings' of their parents, apart from the fact that our government considers this age group independant enough to drink, vote and *fight for our country!* Regardless of this, it will be impossible for parents to keep one or more students in living away from home expenses. And it is also unreasonable for students to defer two years to commence studies to prove their independant status. It is just ridiculous to expect a student studying for a degree, let alone a long degree such as medicine, to add a further two years onto their qualifying time.

I have undertaken an '*extremely conservative*' analysis of the basic 'share' costs involved in the day to day living expenses incurred by one country students wishing to leave home to attend university in Perth. I have only allocated \$80/week food allowance - I might add, I don't know how many people could survive on this. There are no allowances made for taxi fares to keep female students safe and who must rely on public transport to get themselves home in the evenings after attending late classes. Also please note, if you are a college boarder, there are no allowances made for first year students to have a car on premises. I have made no allowance for clothing, household expenses (such as cleaning fluids), sporting fees (for health), insurances, entertainment, medical/pharmaceutical expenses or travelling expenses to travel home for the occasional visit to see their families.

	\$
1. Electricity	240
2. Food -	4160
3. Telephone -	480
4. Gas -	240
5. Water -	120
6. Rent -	7280
7. Broadband	500
8. Transport	2000

9. Books	1200
10. Guild Fees	<u>120</u>
<u>TOTAL/YEAR</u>	<u>16340</u>

With these sort of costs, could you imagine trying to keep a student in living away from home expenses if they were studying a 10 year degree in medicine? Can you imagine if you had more than one child attending university? Our government has not provided equal educational facilities (as our city counterparts) in our regional areas and our children *must* move away from home if they want to pursue their career path.

Why should country kids be discriminated against because of their geographical location? It would seem that the government intends to keep rural/regional people as *peasants!*

Please hear our voice!!!
Mrs Kerry Ferraro