

To whom it may concern,

The changes made to the Youth Allowance for inner regional areas have greatly affected my chances of completing a degree at University. People living in inner regional areas still have to leave home just like those living in outer regional areas. Their needs are no different with respect to attempting to study at University. Previously I had planned to take a gap year and then study Engineering at Curtin in Perth after I finished year 12 (graduated this year). With the changes to Youth Allowance it is not possible for me to do this anymore.

What also needs to be understood is that once most people leave home (e.g. to study at university), they become completely independent and are no longer supported by their parents! Regardless of how much their parents may earn. This means the new threshold test is useless as all students (living in the southwest's inner regional areas) wishing to attend university will have to leave home and live elsewhere. So there will be many students with reduced access to support, if they attain Youth Allowance through the parental income test, as their parents earn over the threshold but do not support them in any way.

In my case, my parents earn over the threshold for the living away from home criteria so the amount I will receive under the income test will be significantly reduced. Even if my parents did want to support me, they could still not afford it as it cost approximately \$145 a week for accommodation, then extra for food and other necessities. I know this because my two older brothers are currently studying in Perth and are gratefully receiving the full amount of the Youth Allowance. I also have a younger brother who has just finished year 11 and also plans on studying in Perth after year 12. If our parents were to support us, it would then cost them \$290 per week in accommodation costs alone for us both to study. As I said before they cannot afford to support one of us, let alone the both of us.

Previously these people (such as myself) could turn to the Independent Youth Allowance (appropriate name for students not living at home who are studying and are INDEPENDENT of parental support, which will be most of the southwest's inner regional students). Now we are asked to do an unrealistic amount of hours per week over an unrealistic timeframe.

Work in Busselton, where I live, is very seasonal and it is not easy to find a job that is over thirty hours a week for a period of even 12 months for someone who has just finished school. This amount of work is even more difficult to find for a period of 18 months and this timeframe creates even more problems. I know this because I have handed my resume into a number of places and only had one response for full time employment. This employer was very interested until they found out it was only for a short period of time until I could gain the Independent Youth Allowance and go to University. They decided it was not worth the investment for such a short period. I do have a casual job at Sam's Warehouse (retail outlet) and the hours I work show just how seasonal work in Busselton is. During the Christmas period it is easy for me to get 30 hours of work each week. However for the rest of the year,

hours per week are very minimal. Sometimes they may only need me for a few hours every 2-3 weeks. This is the same story for most other businesses in the area, only a few peak times in the year where they require young and mostly unskilled people such as those just out of high school.

Universities holding places for a maximum of 1 year is one of these problems. Getting accepted once does not guaranty acceptance when next applying. This could mean a student works for 12 of the 18 months to gain the Independent Youth Allowance, only to find out after this time that they have not been accepted into University, leaving them unskilled and not a very attractive option for employers.

On the 12th of August 2010 I sent a letter to Julia Gillard (then referred to Senator Chris Evans) about my concerns of the changes to the Youth Allowance. Three months later I received a reply letter which addressed none of my concerns that I expressed in my letter. So I beg you people of the Senate! Please see how much this has disadvantaged the youth living in inner regional areas and change the criteria back so they can achieve access to higher education.

Yours sincerely

Jacob Lanigan