

I am writing to you regarding the plan to change Centrelink criteria for young people entering university. I am extremely concerned of the message this proposal is sending for a number of reasons

1. It is extremely difficult for country students to access university with the problems of distance, accommodation, lack of family support once in the city, adjustment to living in the city.
2. Country students are already disadvantaged by the lack of access to specialist schools, more extensive curriculum, this will broaden the gap further and force students to remain in unskilled jobs, therefore reducing future numbers of potential country teachers, doctors, lawyers etc.
3. I believe it is impractical for most young people to find an unskilled job (almost full time hours for 18months. Most gap year young people pick up seasonal work and this doesn't have the capacity for long term work.
4. These new guidelines will put more country families in financial stress to try to help their children through university and survive on limited money.
5. These guidelines do not allow for young people to have any time off work in 18 months, this would be a safety issue. Most students finish in November - 18 months would take this to May the following year. What happens then does the universities have to change when their intakes periods change?
6. A number of university courses only allow 1 year deferral not 2 years, as would be necessary.
7. To change this system with no notice to young people in their gap year and no notice to universities, high schools etc who help students plan their pathways to higher education in an injustice.

I request that you take these considerations into account when this legislation is being discussed in parliament. I believe that no consideration has been given to the difficulties of country people accessing higher education and are being discriminated against. If they were living in the cities, they would continue to live at home. There would be no extra expense. Country people have to be hours from supportive families, access transport to visit families, pay for accommodation, adjust to a different lifestyle away from family & friends, buy their own food. The list goes on, without university fees and text books. More should be done to support our future professionals instead of trying to claw back the 'stimulus payments' by penalising our intelligent future tax payers, who will be the leaders of this great country in years to come.

Thank you for any assistance you can provide

Regards

Hazel Verrall

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