

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010

Ms Nola Marino MP  
Federal Member for Forrest  
PO Box 2028  
BUNBURY WA 6231

Dear Madam

**RE: YOUTH ALLOWANCE BILL**

I am writing to express my concern to the issue facing those affected by the recent withdrawal of Youth Allowance, myself being one of those.

I am currently sixteen years old and have recently been elected Head Girl of a public High School in Bunbury. After completing Year 12 in 2011, I had intended to take a gap year before commencing university at UWA to complete a double degree in Marine Biology and Environmental Science. I currently have a part-time job and I had intended to work fulltime in the gap year to save money to help support myself along with the assistance of the Youth Allowance which would have assisted me to support myself while reaching my educational goals. With the Youth Allowance withdrawal my plans have been destroyed as have a lot of other country students that I know. It is stressful and costly enough to relocate to the city without having the extra stress of having to financially support yourself.

Although my parents are middle wage income earners they are in no position to support my university expenses at the current moment. My father has been forced into early retirement diagnosed with post traumatic stress syndrome and so my mother alone is currently supporting our family. They are currently already financially supporting my older sister, with the help of Youth Allowance, who has had to relocate to Perth and is currently in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study at Curtin University. My parents are aging and need to save for retirement and will not be able to support my double degree which may put my future education in jeopardy.

Education should not be ruined over cost. Australia is already short on professionals so not offering financial support to those university bound will only lead to a greater demand. Country towns are also short on professionals and country students are more likely to return to the country after finishing their degrees than metropolitan students.

Those of us living in what is now called the inner regional areas are now disadvantaged then those in outer regional and metropolitan areas. City students are already at an advantage, both financially and emotionally with educational facilities within range and our living away from home expenses will be the same as those living in outer regional areas. We are also at a disadvantage that we have to wait two years to enter the workforce where as the other students do not. It would be cheaper for the government to send us away to our required universities then build adequate facilities in our areas.

It is hard enough as it is finding a fulltime job for a school leavers student with over thirty hours work per week and enough pay to support us through university. Employers do not want to hire someone who they know will leave at the end of the year to go to university. If I need to get a job in Perth to support myself while I'm there studying then my studies will be put at risk, it will be very stressful and difficult to work full time while being a full time student.

At the age of eighteen we are allowed to drink, drive, vote and be recruited for war and yet we are still forced to rely on our parents to support us. The cost of university is around about \$15, 000 to \$20, 000 per year and there is almost no way it is possible for a student to earn this while maintaining good grades and passing their courses. Think of those studying medicine or double degrees who can go for eight years, they can not be expected to rely on their parents for so long.

I know a lot of country students who are in the same position as me; unsure or unable to attend university with out the support of youth allowance. Since Youth Allowance has been dropped we find ourselves stressing about our futures and wondering whether we will ever be able to enter university. I do not want to delay my studies until I am 21 and enter university as a mature age student. I could qualify if I were to take an 18 month to 2 year gap. However, many universities do not allow you to defer for longer than 12 months and will not take in mid year entrants for some course. Regional students are forced to enter the work force a lot later then the outer regional and metropolitan students which is both unfair and inequitable.

It is expensive to rent in Perth and support ourselves so many would be forced to take the 400km, five hour trip every day we have a class on which is not only expensive but also not environmentally friendly. If we have late night classes then we will be forced to drive home tired increasing the risk of road accidents.

Please help me to go to university by allowing youth allowance. Without it I, and many other students, may not be able to continue my education. This will only lead to unemployment and a lack of professionals.

Yours sincerely

Madison Roberts

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