

2 December 2010

The Honourable Julia Gillard
Prime Minister
P.O. Box 6022
House of Representatives Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Julia

My name is Joshua George McGann and I am writing to indicate to you how much your decision to change the criteria for 'Youth Allowance' will affect me and my future.

I was born in Karratha WA in 1992 and have lived in rural Australia for the entire eighteen and a half years of my life. I have been raised by only my mother since I was 11 years old and have watched her struggle to provide a good home and education for both my younger sister and I. She is a public school teacher who has always encouraged and supported us to do well at school in order to have the possibility of a bright future.

As a young child I attended Dunsborough Primary School and then went on to Mackillop Catholic College in Busselton, where I completed my TEE in 2009. At my graduation ceremony I was the highest award winner, taking out 4 awards for academic achievement and citizenship. My hard work and good exams results saw me offered a place at University of Western Australia to study engineering. Knowing that I have no family living in the metropolitan area and knowing that I would have to relocate to Perth for the period of my studies, I have spent the past 12 taking a GAP year to earn some money to help with the cost of living away from home. Work has at times been easy to find but never long lasting. You see Busselton is a small tourist town and all work has been at the high tourist times. As soon as the tourists leave I would be the first to get put off due to my age and the fact that management knew that I was intending to leave at the end of the year so preferred to keep people on that would be around next year. I finally found a job at a bakery where I have had some steady work, starting at 2am and working through the night till 11am.

The problem Prime Minister is, that the criteria that your government (*that I voted for as a first time voter*) has set means that I will NOT be able to qualify for Youth Allowance even though my mother only earns \$72,000 a year. The work I have been able to gain has been in the majority inconsistent and spasmodic. I have definitely managed 15 hours per week (*sometimes with 2 jobs*) but nowhere near the 30 hours required. Sadly I have friend that I have grown up with that live less than 9Kms away and have been able to accrue similar hours as to myself that WILL qualify as they are on the right side of the inner/outer regional boundary. Even though the cost for us to relocate and live in Perth will be the same. I ask you Prime Minister how this is fair?

My mother was prepared to sell up and move to Perth so that I could stay living at home but she has for the past 26 years been a teacher who has believed in improving

the quality of education to regional students and loves her work as the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Education and does not really want to leave. Additionally, my sister will be commencing Year 12 in 2011 and completing her TEE in the hope of gaining university entrance and following her dream of becoming a doctor. I think you will agree that moving schools at the beginning of your final year would prove to be very difficult and put her at a disadvantage. I simply can not ask my family to do this for me.

I have also approached UWA to ask if I could extend my deferral period so that I can continue to work and support myself when commencing studies in 2012 but they would not grant me the extension of time.

Basically what I say to you Prime Minister is this;

1. My family are hard working and proud Australians.
2. My sister and I are conscientious, respectful and high achieving young adults.
3. My mother has always lived and worked full time in public education in the rural areas.
4. My sister and I wish to study in areas of growing demand in our country (Engineering & Medicine).
5. I have worked in unstable employment in some somewhat undesirable jobs (e.g. mucking out of milking shed, long night shift work etc) and having no 'holiday' time during the past 12 months.
6. I have still not met your requirements for Youth Allowance!
7. I live just a few kilometres from other students that went to school with who have worked less than me, who will qualify.
8. My mother and I both voted for the Labor Party at the federal election even though you changed the youth allowance policy.

So to close my letter Prime Minister, I appeal to you and your government to reconsider your stance on the Youth Allowance criteria and allow all students who live in the country to be eligible under the same rules.

Yours sincerely

Joshua George McGann