

Subject: Independence Youth Allowance

Hi

My name is Kathy Parker and I was given your email address to contact regarding the upcoming parliamentary enquiry into Youth Allowance. I have emailed Fiona Nash and some of the independents regarding the absolute travesty of the 30 hour per week work criteria for 18 months for rural students.

Our story is that I have a daughter just finished 3rd year at the ANU in Canberra and a son just finished 1st year at the University of Wollongong. We live on a drought stricken rural property near Forbes in the Central West of NSW, so both of the kids have to live away to attend university and we could not afford to let the kids have a GAP year as there were no jobs here. I also battled breast cancer during my daughters HSC which cost money we didn't have.

Our daughter has worked herself to death to both attend university and hold down a casual job so she could pay her own rent and ease the burden on us. She worked many more than 30 hours during all university holidays and not as many when she had lectures. She earned the required \$19,000 + work criteria but she was rejected because you cannot average the 30 hours. This is a disgrace as it is impossible to work 30 hours and attend university as well. 30 hours is a full time job.

What I find outrageous is the fact that many kids in our small rural towns have no prospect of either work or university and they are able to sit back here and receive single parent benefits or unemployment benefits while our daughter receives nothing. How about putting a 30 hour work/volunteer criteria on those on the dole or single parent benefits. Why are rural students discriminated against? This is not equity by any means. I would love to have the opportunity to front this committee and politicians to speak regarding our situation as ours is not an isolated case.

The new criteria make it impossible for any rural students to receive independent youth allowance and those who have a GAP year can only defer university for 12 months anyway.

Parliament must act or rural students will not be able to further their education and become taxpayers in the future.

Kathy Parker