

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing in regards to the new changes to the Independent Youth Allowance criteria. I am a 2009 school leaver classified under the new laws as an Inner Rural student, meaning that I have to work for an average of 30 hours per week over a period of 18 months in order to qualify for Youth Allowance. At the time of my graduation, the new changes were still unconfirmed, and so I chose to take a gap year in the hope that I would still be able to qualify somehow.

I live at best, two hours by car (and longer if taking public transport) away from my university, meaning that a commute (which is supposedly plausible for Inner Rural students) to and from university each day would require me to leave home at 5.30am and not return until well after sunset, somehow finding time to study and support myself with a job on top of this. This is not even taking into consideration the cost of travelling, whether it be petrol or train/bus tickets- all of which would accumulate to a sum similar to that of a week's rent anyway.

This being considered, my only real option is to move up to the city, where I'd need to find and pay for accommodation.

Under the old Youth Allowance laws, I would have had to work to earn a gross sum of 75% of the minimum wage.

When the changes were announced, we'd originally hoped that at the very least, I could qualify by working 40 hours a week for a period of 12 months therefore averaging the same amount of hours, however, when the changes were finally published online in July we discovered that they had split the time period into segments, making it impossible for me to qualify unless I worked solidly for the whole 18 month period. My university will not let me defer for any time period longer than a year, and under the new laws I would have to relinquish my place were I to pursue Youth Allowance.

I personally find it quite unfair, that people who live an additional half an hour away from me can qualify under the old laws, but I, for whom it is just as impractical to commute to and from Uni, have to suffer the new ones, because a Government operating from the other side of the country drew a line between us and decided that we were different regions. Therefore, I urge you to treat inner rural students the same as outer rural as the difficulties we both face are, in fact, the same.

Thankyou for reading this submission.

Once again, I implore that you reconsider, to allow us all an equal opportunity to study and support ourselves throughout our years at University.

Regards, Zoe Mitchell