

To The Committee Secretary of Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

30/11/2010

Subject Youth Allowance

Dear Committee

I would as a parent of young Australians like to put forward my opinions on Youth Allowance changes that affect the youth of my town Dubbo.

My daughter who does not meet the direct entry youth allowance scheme straight out of Year 12 and must now work for 2 years for a minimum of 30 hours per week as I see it is being disadvantaged by your system. While she does not qualify at present she is taking a 12 month gap year in the hope of trying to earn enough money to get her started at university and to help our family out with the financial burden that she will undertake. Even after 12 months she under this system will not qualify for youth allowance even though she will have to move away from home and become independent.

I believe the minimum cost of her attending her chosen university is:-

Accommodation \$300 per week on campus

Travel Dubbo to Major city ???

Text books ????

Living Expenses ????

Not to mention the estimated \$8000 per year HECS bill that she will accumulate (\$40 000)

It would be lovely if she could study her chosen profession in our local region and she could live at home but this is not an option as the course of law/economic is not available in the Dubbo region.

Emma will have to attend University in Sydney, Wollongong or Canberra to achieve this double degree over a 5 year period.

We sometimes wonder if this is even financially possible for her and other students in our local region.

I have some suggestions for the committee.

Instead of basing the youth allowance on location, or income earnings of families etc maybe it could be looked at what is locally available at universities in the region. If a student wishes to study a certain course and it is available say within a radius of 60km from their home address then they should not qualify for youth allowance under any circumstance as they

can live at their parents' home. This would save the government mega money on city youth who receive these payments and continue to live with their parents.

I feel that if the chosen courses are not available locally then youth should qualify automatically for youth allowance. They need help to become professionals. It would then be hoped that they are more likely to return as professionals to regional areas than their city cousin who won't even contemplate moving to rural areas once qualified.

Please consider the unfairness of this. Our young people attend the local high school with many people who will qualify for youth allowance under the old scheme as their postal address is in the outlying small villages that are scattered around Dubbo. They find it hard to understand this reasoning.

Personally I would like to see it changed back so as regional students are encouraged to go to university, not discouraged through unfairness and poor policy. My suggestion would no doubt see the government save money on city and/ or regional students that have the option of completing their qualifications locally and living at home.

Please make it fair for all.