

To whom it may concern

- I have worked really hard up to and including my TEE to achieve high grades to be accepted into University to do an Engineering degree in Perth.
- I live 200km south of Perth in Gelorup (just south of Bunbury), which would mean I would have to leave my family and friends to relocate to Perth.
- Perth is the closest educational facility offering a degree in my chosen field. This would mean a 400km round trip each day to attend university. This equates to a 5 hour trip per day. We have very few public facilities in our area. There is no public transport, no street lighting or nearby amenities, let alone an equitable educational facility.
- I am one of the lucky ones to have found full time employment in 2010 since finishing my TEE in 2009 and I have been striving to earn and save as much money as I possibly can to help fund my living away from home expenses to attend University. Although I have a very good job as a receptionist for a reputable company, I am only earning \$11.60/hour base wage and realize that there is no way I will be able to save enough money to fund a 4 year university degree in my chosen field. Unfortunately, many of my friends have been unable to find full time employment, so there is no way they could find 30 hours a week over an 18 month period, a requirement in the current Youth Allowance criteria.
- Doing such an intense full time course such as engineering, I have been told by the university it will be next to impossible to hold down a job (which would earn enough to fund a year's expenses) in conjunction with full time studies. The course is very intense and requires many on and off contact hours.
- Unfortunately under the government's Youth Allowance reforms, I will no longer be eligible for government assistance because any government assistance will be 'means tested' on my parent's income, despite the fact that I am living independently. Under the new criteria, I am considered an 'inner' regional student (I live in Gelorup) and therefore will not qualify for government assistance. Please note that students who live a mere 30 minutes away in Dunsborough (deemed 'outer' regional) will receive government support, even though we will both incur the same costs to relocate and live in the city. These students will qualify by taking a 12 month working gap year. I cannot imagine students at the age of 24 to 28 still being financially dependent on their parents, which would definitely be the case for students doing long degrees such as a medicine, engineering or double degree.
- My parents are not in a position to help me financially as they are heavily in debt and cannot afford to fund two households if I relocate to the city. Their finances were determined many years ago, long before the reforms to Youth Allowance were made. They also already help support my brother who has had to relocate for educational purposes.
- It is estimated that it will cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per annum (not including HECS) in relocation and living away from home expenses. I also note that it will be more expensive for female students because they will incur more costs due to personal safety and security reasons ie taxi costs after late night classes. It is not safe for female students to travel on public transport at night in Perth.

- Why is it since the age of 18 years, when I have strived so hard to earn my independence from my parents both emotionally and financially by continuing to work full time for an entire year, paying my way and learning to live independently, that the government still considers that I should still be tied to my parent's 'apron strings'? I am old enough to vote, drink alcohol, be accountable to the full brunt of adult laws, drive a car and can be called upon at any time to fight for my country during times of war. This is another example of double standards when it suits.
- I could qualify for some government assistance if I were to defer my studies for 18 months to 2 years, but I have already deferred my studies for 1 year, which is more than city students would be required to do. Not only is it untenable to defer for two years, but some Perth universities will not allow a 2 year deferment and many courses do not have a mid-term intake if you were to defer 18 months. After a 12 month break in studies, I am already behind my city counterparts who do not have to defer their studies and do not have the same financial, emotional and safety hardships of country students. Not only can City students continue to live in the family home and reap the financial/emotional benefits, but they also have public transport and educational facilities of their choice at their door step. City students will also be able to enter the workforce 2 years earlier than students such as myself, which I think is a highly discriminatory and inequitable situation.
- Why does the government refuse to help country students? After-all, we are saving the government money by not having to build equitable educational facilities in our regional areas when we all pay the same taxes. Surely it is better economy to provide assistance to country students to live away from home than to build and staff multiple universities in the country. It would appear that the government does not think that country students deserve an education, a future and a better life.
- Not only have I been working hard and saving hard, but I have been fighting hard for the government to recognize our plight. It is all becoming too hard. To put it plainly, I cannot afford to move away from home to support myself for the next 4 years. I do not have any skills to warrant a higher paying job and so I am doomed to stay where I am on a wage of 11.60/hour with no future and no prospects. This is all in a back drop of the country screaming for more professionals (especially engineers) to assist with the current demand especially experienced in Western Australia.