

SUBMISSION YOUTH ALLOWANCE INQUIRY.

We live in Gladstone, Queensland and are classed as Inner Regional. The closest Universities that provide a degree in Law are Brisbane 6.5 hrs and Townsville 10 hrs away. My daughter has been accepted at JCU in Townsville in 2011. The irony is that if we lived in Townsville and my daughter was accepted to Gladstone University to do Engineering for example, she would be eligible for independence and receive youth allowance, due to Townsville being Outer Regional. If we live 15 mins the other side of Gladstone at Yarwun or Targinie she would be eligible.

I think that is the most important issue and highlights the inequities. She finished school in 2009 and has worked for 12 months to save money to go to University, earning \$20,000. She did not want to delay University for a further year to receive Youth Allowance by working the 30 hrs a week for 18 months. We did not encourage this as we were worried that it would be harder to leave a life being made post school and commence study again.

The Youth Allowance debate and outcome affects the life of not just the young adult going to university. It affects siblings but most importantly the financial situation of the parents. At this time of life many parents are trying to save for retirement. My husband is a Primary School Principal and as the statistics show a Principal that retires at 65 lives only 2 years. He aims to retire at 60 in 4 year's time. How do we accomplish this with no assistance from the Government towards the cost of University which we estimate will be close to \$ 100.000 over 4 years.

If we want country areas to have the same access to services as the city, e.g. doctor's, lawyers, engineers and accountants, then Regional young adults must have the opportunity to go to university. As noted during the recent discussion on the subject 30% of eligible regional children do not end up going to University due to financial burden. Therefore the regional areas miss out. Children who are raised in large Metropolitan areas are less likely to go to country areas to work after they finish their degree. If you look in the phone book in Gladstone, there are very few Doctors names that you can pronounce.

I was recently listening to the Labour Government giving their reasons for not supporting expanding Youth Allowance to Inner Regional areas and it is truly astounding how they, in particular the minister Chris Evans and Julia Gillard, never **really** answer the questions put to them, they skirt around the injustice issues of lines of maps and inner and outer regional, districts who is deserving and who is not. Somehow they believe they sound intelligent and believable. Any parent or young adult who understands the issues of the youth allowance debate sits astounded at the sheer arrogance of the Labour Party. It is time the Labour Government assists prospective students gain independence as they deserve and fulfil their dreams.

The issue of independence also requires mentioning, it is imperative that discussion also include and rectify the changes made to the independence criteria of

2008/2009. The fact that a young adult's independence is reliant upon a parent's financial situation and not their own earned independence is unjust. Before the changes in March 2010 my daughter would have had and gladly would have worked full time for 12 months doing 35 hours a week. This would have proven her to be independent herself and she would have received the support of youth allowance enabling her to support herself through university and not rely upon her parents or guardians. The standard university degree takes 4 years full time to complete. This means that a young adult going straight from school or a year or two after, will finish between 20 and 24 years of age. By the time a young adult reaches early twenties they should and mostly are completely financially and emotionally independent from their families. As the work load for university students is so demanding it is extremely difficult to earn a living that would pay for the necessities of life; food, shelter and clothing. What is the point of having an independence criteria that does not give the applicant true independence depending on parent's salary?

It is also an absolute disgrace that the Greens and Nick Xenophon chose to vote against the legislation debate, in particular the fact that Nick Xenophon a Metropolitan MP had so much power and would have no idea of the hardships faced by parents of young adults in regional areas. I am extremely disappointed with the Greens who are supposed to represent the people of Australia as you stated today on sky news, (2/12/10). When you have such power it is imperative you listen because I do not believe there is one person in Australia that can see your voting against it as fair and just. To young prospective students, Greens statements that there needs to be more work done on the current legislation is a penalty which is likely to take years. This does not help families whose child finished in 2009 and worked a gap year in 2010. If the rules change, will we be entitled to back pay? If not the Greens have let us down.

Lastly there is the argument that without Government support it is highly probable that my daughter will feel indebted to us and/or we will struggle financially, which in turn will lead her to working more hours whilst completing her degree. It is foreseeable that this will impede her studies and which in turn will leave her struggling to pass subjects and at the very least she will not accomplish the very best that she is capable of.

Yours Sincerely

Donna Nicholls