

To Whom It May Concern

My name is _____ and I am an 18-Year-old former student of Trinity Catholic College Lismore. Last Year (2009) I completed the HSC and after receiving my results I was offered a place to study at the University of Melbourne. At this time when I was making decisions for my plans in 2010, I researched the options with regards to receiving Youth Allowance. I also went into the Lismore Centrelink Branch to find out further information.

After doing this I decided not to take up the offer this year to study and would defer and take a gap year in order to work and be eligible to receive Youth allowance. As I live in a single parent household, I did not want to rely on my father for financial support throughout my degree for not only high living expenses in the city but also education related costs.

When I began my Gap year the Centrelink rules and regulations stated that I would be classified as being 'Independent' if I earned 75% of the minimum income (\$20 000) within an 18th month period after leaving school. It stated that rules would change July 2010 but had no information of what these would be. When I inquired about these changes at the Lismore Centrelink Branch they had no information and did not know how dramatic the changes to Youth Allowance would be; in fact the lady I spoke to printed me out the current rules and said if I followed them I would be able to receive youth allowance. In order to earn the \$20 000 required I have worked two jobs and at times working up to a 50-hour week. It wasn't until a few weeks ago when I was revising my earnings that I went back onto the Centrelink website to find that the rules I had been following had been removed and The new rules indicated I needed to for work 2 years at 30 hours a week, or get married or have a child.

What are we (the students within my cohort and I who live in 'inner regional' areas) supposed to do when the 'goal posts' are changed mid game with little warning. I find this inconsistent and grossly unfair to all those that took a gap year in 2010 intending to obtain Youth Allowance. If the rules are going to be changed they should be with ample warning so that students can make rational decisions. For many from regional areas who by necessity need to move away from home, this may make the difference between going to University or not. I find it very unfair that there is a lottery of where one happens to live and being able to afford to go away to university rather than living at home in the city.

I ask you to lobby the Government to move the cut off for this year so that those who started are eligible for Youth Allowance. Also all regional and rural students should not