

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Committee Secretary of Senate Standing Committee  
On Education, Employment and Working Relations  
P.O. Box 6100  
Parliament House ACT 2600

Dear Secretary of the Senate Committee

RE- Independent Youth Allowance Inquiry.

As a parent living in the Central West of NSW I thank Senator Fiona Nash and Mr John Cobb (Member for Calare) for representing the parents and students of our nation in relation to 'Youth Allowance' and their attempt to enable Australian student reach their goal of completing Tertiary Education.

I thank you for the invitation for parents to put forward their concerns re-the current status of Youth Allowance availability.

\*Youth Allowance needs to be available to ALL Australians no matter where they reside.

\*Availability under the same criteria for each student is necessary to remove the uncertainty of affordability for students and parents as to whether a child can attend University.

\*Students completing Secondary School need to know that they can follow their dream of following onto Tertiary studies if they wish.

I see it a priority for the Australian Government to support Australian students to obtain a Tertiary qualification to ensure they are employable in the future. These students are the future of this nation.

As a member of the community who recently experienced the Federal Election I think the current Labour Government has created a Regional Area portfolio and if this is a legitimate portfolio I would trust it would have a priority of looking after the youth of the area and wish to see youth prosper for the nation's future.

\*No Australian student of tax-paying parents should be denied Tertiary Education due to a financial choice needing to be made by parents as to whether the family can afford to support a child at University.

If the existing criterion for 'Youth Allowance' continues, families will need to make decisions as to which child in a family will be given the opportunity to be educated over other family members.

\*The financial status of a family should not be the deciding factor of eligibility of a student having the opportunity to obtain a University Degree.

\*Under current criteria for Youth Allowance we may find in the future that only a select social group will have the opportunity to attend University. This will mean that many potential academically skilled students will have to forego their dream either due to the inability of obtaining work for the 30hrs per week and /or not being able to earn the required income due to the lack of employment positions in Regional Australia or due to their parents income not being able to meet the financial commitments of having a student living away from home.

\*Where a student lives should not change the eligibility of applying for 'Youth Allowance' and it should not change the criteria for applying for the allowance. Just because a student may have a postcode near a University does not mean they will remain in the area to attend the local University. The close by University may not offer the course the student wishes to study.

As I have mentioned I am a parent living in Regional NSW.

I am a Nurse and my husband an Electrician both on average incomes.

During this year my first child graduated from the University of Canberra as an Undergraduate after completing a three year course.

For her to undertake this course she had to work in casual positions to supplement what we could provide for her while she lived on University Campus.

All her positions entailed her working till late at night or early morning and had she not worked and studied we would not have been able to financially support her as we also had a second child at an Independent School paying School Fees.

My daughter states "that if she had have been eligible for 'Youth Allowance' she would have achieved a better university grading as she would not have felt tired constantly and would have been able to study more intensely.

This child has now received an offer from the University of Sydney to undertake a Masters in Physiotherapy.

At the same time my second child is ready to apply for University entry. If my first child is NOT eligible to obtain 'Youth Allowance' (which maybe the case with the limited job opportunity there has been for her in Canberra over the last 12months) I am going to have to make a choice as to which child I am going to be able to support at University. As a family we are not going to be able to support two children in the University system.

My second child has found herself two part time Casual jobs since completing the Higher School Certificate in October and has applied for a permanent fulltime job but sadly has been unsuccessful with her application.

As a family we have a dilemma unfolding. If my second child cannot obtain a 30hr per week position in the local town she is going to have to move to a larger centre or city to obtain work. If this is to happen as parents we are going to have to support her living away from home so that she will be eligible to obtain 'Youth Allowance' to allow her commence University in 2012. As a family again we are uncertain whether we are going to be able to afford supporting two students living away from home. As parents we ask if we really can afford to do this.

It is our wish to support both children as our second child has received a definite entry to the University of Wollongong in Communications/Journalism and also early entry to the University of New England in Arts and Psychology.

As a parent I call on the 'Independent Youth Allowance Inquiry' to truly consider the difficult position the current 'Youth Allowance' Criteria is placing on students, parents and families and the potential academic skill loss that currently exists for our nation.

Regional Australia already has many obstacles and the youth of the area can do without the obstacle of obtaining their highest academic potential.

I ask the Australian Federal Labour Government and the Minister for Regional Australia to stand up for the future of the nation by reviewing the current Criteria for 'Youth Allowance' in Australia. I encourage the Government to change their thought pattern on 'Youth Allowance' eligibility to make Tertiary Education accessible to ALL, not matter of where you live or from what social status you come from.

Surely it is better to invest in a student attempting to gain a qualification for themselves and their nation rather than put every stumbling block in their way which may force them onto a 'Centre link' income for the rest of their life.

As parents we have invested in our children's education and we live to ensure they obtain their goals and be citizens who can give to our Nation's future.

We ask that as the elected Government you also stand and show your responsibility to our nation's future, the youth of our nation who are striving to complete their education.

Yours sincerely  
Lorraine Everest.