

I'm beginning to think that I voted incorrectly in the last election, assuming that the Greens and even the Labor Government would be making a positive change to Youth Allowance. (You know what they say assuming make an 'ass' out of 'u' and 'me').

I've taken a working gap year this year out of necessity. My parents cannot afford to send me to a 'sandstone' University. I've worked 40 hour weeks, in an attempt to build some sort of financial foundation so that in my first year of University I would not have to struggle with maintaining good grades, work and a social life. Simply, its has been unsuccessful. I've had to move from my home town of Coffs Harbour to Sydney six months earlier than anticipated (I'm enrolling at the University of Sydney in 2011). This is because I was made redundant at my first full time job as Telstra were making budget adjustments in the new financial year. I was cut mostly because I was young, flexible and less experienced at the job, only having been there for 6 months.

I was on Centrelink payments for 2-3 months while trying to find work in Coffs Harbour, it was little more than \$150 a fortnight. After accepting the fact that Coffs didn't cater to jobseekers my age, I had to look elsewhere hence the fact that I am now living in Sydney and have been since August. With bond, rent, food, utilities, public transport costs (there is no way I can afford a car), and general self maintenance over this time, it was as if all my savings from the first half of the year never existed. I had to start fresh. I continue to struggle juggling these costs as would anyone else my age. Then add on the fact that I would like to think I had a social life. Since gaining full time employment again. I am no longer eligible for Youth Allowance.

The thought of next year, my first year of Uni, scares me!

I would like to maintain a well-rounded lifestyle. This year frankly has been lonely, I only socialise with my work friends and one close friend who already is at University as her parents are paying for it all. I can't help but compare lifestyles.

For this reason, I want to live on campus. I was accepted to Sancta Sophia College at Sydney Uni. I'm not naive I doubt there would be much change made in regards to Youth Allowance, and if there was a change it would be too late because at that stage I probably would have graduated. I've worked out that I would have to work 23 hours a week simply to maintain the costs of College. Nothing else, that's just food, a room, facilities and a chance at a social environment. Then add on the hours of study and going to tutorials/lectures. I don't think I'd ever get the chance to sew again. I haven't made anything all year. I was hoping to have time to learn a language.

Thank god for HECS, I don't know what I'd do if I had to factor in the cost of the Uni.

I'm from an Inner Regional area wanting a 'sandstone' education. I got the grades. I was accepted. Should the social-economic status of my family hold me back forever? In every sense of the word I am Independent - just not to the Government.