

Dear Nola, Before I begin this letter, please accept my apologies for both it's length and the frustration that you will see evidenced! My daughter, Jessica, has just turned 18 (October). She has spent the last 10 months completing a part-time (weekend) course at Notre Dame University in Fremantle to try and become eligible for entrance into uni to study Special Needs teaching. Her first preference was to go to Notre Dame which is the reason this first course was undertaken there. Regretably, due to recently finding out that she is ineligible for financial assistance, we've had to reassess her alternatives and have chosen to enrol her into Edith Cowan in Bunbury instead. My husband and I both work full time. He works for Forest Products in Harvey and I'm the Business Manager at Mornington Adventure Camp in Wokalup. Our combined income is therefore just over \$100,000.00. Obviously, this means that we don't meet the criteria set for government assistance - in any way!! We've just spent almost \$12,000.00 (uni costs and accommodation) to assist Jessica to complete her course. As you are no doubt very aware, gaining employment in Harvey is very difficult, but full-time employment for her age group is next to impossible - unless you know someone in a position to help! After over 3 years of applying at Supa IGA, she was finally offered a position which at first allowed her to achieve 24 hours/week employment. Since Nat's death, for whatever reason, her hours were reduced (apparently more casuals were employed)?? The point is, Jess chose to take this year as her gap year in order to prepare herself for her application for uni. We found out during the year that she would have to work 30hours/week for 12 months in order to prove herself independant so she decided to try and defer for another 12 months to try and find a full-time job for the next 12 months. I've just got off the phone from Centrelink. It appears that she now has to find work for 18 months, not just 12!! When is this going to end?? My husband and I are currently - on \$104,000.00 trying to pay a mortgage, get a son through high school, get a daughter into uni and support 4 people - 3 of them adults!! Jess wants to help but simply doesn't have the income to do so. Our living expenses are so high now that we're pretty much living from pay to pay. We've been on our property for almost 15 years - Hillview Estate - and are struggling to cope! We were careful when we first went for our mortgage, to ensure that we could afford it comfortably. However, we've had to remortgage twice over the last 2 years in order to try and consolidate. The young man at Centrelink told me that there's nothing he can do. I just can't understand why the middle income earners are the people who seem to miss out all the time! The way things are going, we're going to be lucky to help our daughter at all! How will she be able to attend uni if she doesn't have an income, can't qualify for youth allowance, isn't eligible for assistance from the uni's HECCS Scheme and doesn't have an income herself to get herself through?? What sort of parents does that make us? We've worked so hard to try and get ahead so that we weren't faced with this sort of situation, but no matter what we do, we just seem to miss the mark!! Is there anything at all that you can do to assist us?? I'd be most grateful for any advice that you could offer! Thank you for your time, I know you're a very busy woman.

Kind Regards Tracey-Ann Davis