

Submission- Income support for students

After looking at all the facts and following this issue I am still adamant that the overall effect of the proposed changes to Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance will have a negative impact on rural and regional students.

I see the 90 minute rule as a good way to limit students still living at home from rorting the system and I think that is the kind of solution that needs to be used so that all regional and rural can still claim their independence through the old criteria (\$19532 earned in 18 months after leaving school). Asking students to obtain 30 hours a week for 18 months is nearly impossible and inappropriate as the students who most need to claim their independence are from rural areas where jobs like this are scarce. Forcing us to defer TWO years is also unfair and means our enter scores are no longer valid. Even if we apply mature age, what are we supposed to say we have been doing career wise to make us stand out from the crowd and be experienced enough to get into our courses? I got into law with my enter score and spent this year working as a field labourer for a crop science company putting bags on canola plants so I can make enough money to qualify. I'm lucky to get 24 hours a week there. It's not a job relevant to the career I want so it's certainly not going to show industry experience and look favourably on a law application. Why should country students have to wait 2 years to follow their dreams? Universities enabling a deferment for 18months is NOT a good enough solution either, we should be able to start Uni when everyone else does. A one year deferment is fair, it means those who truly want to go to uni and are willing to work for it will go.

It is also very wrong to cut rent assistance if students are living in a share house. To force students to split it between themselves by only giving it the student whose name the lease is in is just really cheap and making it even harder for country students who MUST move away from home. Students will have to get jobs as it is to make ends meet. I know they want to extend the amount students will be allowed to earn but it will not work taking it away from them and making them make it up elsewhere. Firstly this is because jobs out there are limited (so are the number of shifts we are given) and most importantly there is still full time study to be done.

There is little use complaining without a solution, so here is mine. Keep the old independence criteria but limit it to those moving 90 minutes away. Make all students who are working to claim their independence register themselves as gap year students and state where they are working. Then enforce random checks on students (especially those who work for their parents, to prove they are there and working) and make deferment compulsory (hence you must show proof you deferred you're course).

Even with the changes being postponed to help this year's gap students, the overall effect of the passing of these changes is going to be disastrous for country students.

Megan Freckleton