

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Student Income Support

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The following issues from journals of the Senate No 135 (pp3142) will be addressed in this submission: -

- (a) current measures for student income support, including Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy, with reference to
 - (i) the adequacy of these payments
 - (iv) the ineligibility of Austudy recipients for rent assistance
- (b) the effect of these income support measures on students and their families, with reference to:
 - (i) the increasing costs of higher education
- (c) the importance of adequate income support measures in achieving equitable access to education, with reference to
 - (i) students from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - (ii) improving access to education
- (d) alternative student income support measures

a-i –FULL TIME STUDY IS FULLTIME! The workload is equal to a fulltime working week; therefore a student without financial assistance is severely handicapped. I personally have experienced extreme stress as a mature aged student trying to maintain my family home of 11 years – survival is a week to week ordeal – treats like new clothes, eating out, movies, and concerts or shows are virtually non-existent. The stress levels in 1st year (I am currently in 3rd year) resulted in me developing body symptoms I had never experienced before and as the years have progressed my symptoms have compounded and escalated.

Current payments of Austudy do not provide enough to pay my rent. Therefore basic survival needs such as food, clothes, travel, text books and associated expenses must be covered by other means such as paid work, selling off possessions, or borrowing from friends or family who are also financially challenged. All of these possible sources of income

are erratic and unreliable, causing unnecessary hardship and distraction from my study commitment.

a-iv- The lack of rent assistance in Austudy is an insane, illogical dilemma for myself and all students renting. While receiving 'the dole'/Job Search Allowance I received a small yet helpful amount towards my unavoidably expensive rent, yet as a student I forfeited this basic form of assistance. Without a stable living environment it is extremely difficult to adequately focus and organise study commitments.

b-i -As a mother and grandmother without a stable income, I am not in any position to financially support any of my children into further study. Therefore they are restricted in choice about future training.

c-i- I would class myself as a student from a disadvantaged background. The lack of adequate financial support has limited my potential to access all the materials required for study. For example, the old computer that I use is not capable of all the functions I require - this causes me extra time and stress on assignments, which lack their full potential as a result. There is no doubt my grades would improve - if I had a private tutor, - if I could focus totally on study without having to work erratic hours to pay my rent and survive, and - if the library available on campus was more accessible.

c-ii- The increased cost of higher education further adds to financial difficulties for the majority of students like myself who do not have the benefit of unlimited financial resources. To Australia - as a community - as we keep putting higher education out of the reach of the majority of the population, we are setting up our nation to be ill equipped for the future. Eventually the cost of hiring educated people from other countries will far outweigh the possible initial cost of keeping higher education within a feasible cost to all Australians.

d - As a fulltime student I feel other students and I should not be penalised for working towards further education. I request an adequate amount of income support to allow us to live above the poverty line. The government financial support needs to be equal to Job Search Allowance PLUS extra funds to assist with travel, textbooks, student fees etc. Young students of today maybe deciding your life circumstances 20 to 30 years or so into the future. Do you want them to be well educated and knowledgeable in their chosen field, or to have skimmed through the content of a study program because they were maintaining the equivalent of two full time jobs just to survive?

Please Consider - Sincerely
D. Rajchi