



Dear Committee,

It is the great Australian Dream to be able to gain an education. Currently Australia prides itself on its high level of people who have undertaken a tertiary degree, or pursued a higher than secondary school education. Yet with the recent fee hikes of up to 30% for HECS fees many students are unable to afford to go to university. This combined with the lack of funding and assistance in which to undertake a degree makes it difficult for the average Australian to go to university.

I am currently a year 12 student who dreams of pursuing a degree in Law/Commerce. Yet I currently am unable to afford to go to university. Even though my parents are able to afford for me to attend a private school (which I might mention is one of the cheapest of its kind) it by no means, indicates that we are well off and able to afford university. This means that next year I will have to defer for a year in order to earn sufficient funds to be able to attend and then when or if I do earn a placement I will also have to hold down a part time job just to be able to afford accommodation and basic eating requirements. I believe that this is due to the way in which the allocation for funding is tested. I believe that it is not suitable for rural students and families. Personally I think this is because generally the rural peoples asset base is too large by city standards.

For instance my parents own a dairy farm and a laser contracting business, this is our major problem because we are not eligible for any funding because the asset base of these is too large. Yet what is not taken into account is that the farm and business are ran by the whole family, which is 5 adults, these adults have 5 children between them and when the profit ECT. Is divided is not that much. Also with the asset base, these large assets are required in order to actually run the day to day affairs of the business.

These large powerful tractors although they are worth a fair bit tend to discriminate against the rural people as those who dwell in the city and own their own small businesses do not have the large assets. If a person is able to go to university, but must hold a job down a job that is usually part time and pays minimum wages it increases the age at which people are actually graduating from University, and therefore earning a wage and paying the government. Not only does this place a hefty burden upon the student and their ability to satisfactorily study, but also it places a bigger debt on the government. Not only that but it actually decreases the time which the young people can spend with their families as they are usually unable to go home for holidays and weekends as they must be able to keep their job in order to earn money to pay for their living expenses.

A new system should be introduced that separates the means and asset based tests for living allowance into the City and country based. This would make it a more fair system. Also the Independence threshold should be lowered and perhaps instead of making it more difficult to get into university the government should make it easier for students to attend and incentives should be provided. After all the education ultimately benefits the country.

Yours sincerely,
Hannah Pickles