



## Student poverty inquiry Submission

I think there are a number of big problems with respect to Student Poverty in Australia, but I wish to tell you about few simple problems that myself and others in similar situations have faced.

I attended school in Alice Springs and upon finishing uni I was accepted into Adelaide Uni to study International Studies and Media. My parents, having two other school aged siblings to support, informed me that they wanted me to go to uni, and would do everything to help, but that they couldn't provide me with any money. I applied for youth allowance, and because my parents earned too much money I was ineligible. I was informed however that if I took a year off and earned over a certain amount of money I could become independent on my parents.

This is the first major problem with youth allowance. How is it that if I am forced to move 1500km away from home that I am not considered independent of my parents? Not only have I faced this problem, but many others have as well. People who have to move to another city to study should be eligible for youth allowance, it is simple, if you have to move out of your home to study there are going to be massive costs, and support will be needed to cover these.

The second problem I have is that now that I receive youth allowance as someone who is considered independent of my parents, it is nowhere near enough to cover the costs of living. Very simply the rate of Youth Allowance needs a substantial boost. Also the rent assistance needs an increase as rent is the single biggest expense for students, and the rent assistance we currently receive is only a drop in a very large bucket. Also the remote areas allowance that I received when I first came to uni. It's another of those things about centrelink that I just don't understand, I received it for a while, but it stopped and wasn't very little anyway. This is probably something that could help those people who have had to move a long way from home and can't receive all the different types of support that you can get from home, if it's only a little while away.

This related to the next problem, and that is with Centrelink. Its too complicated and confusing, and there are always stuff ups. Trying to receive payments from there is almost a full time job, especially when you have to send every piece of paperwork three times because they lose it, or spend an hour on hold on the phone or waiting in line in the office. Also the way the system works if you work while on centrelink is way too complicated and discourages students from working on it. The amount of money you are allowed to earn should be way more than it is.

This is especially the case for students who might try to pay some of their HECS upfront to gain the discount. This is something that I don't have any hope of doing, but it makes me incredibly angry that those who can afford to pay it up front get a discount. It is effectively giving a discount to the rich. Get rid of the discount and with the money saved reduce everyone's overall HECS debt, not just those that can afford to pay it up front.

The next problem is still with work, and it is the fact that students are not eligible to use the job network if they are on youth allowance. It's quite clearly not enough to live on and yet the we are not allowed access to a network that will help us get a job. It seems as if we are being discouraged from finding work to supplement the shortcomings of youth allowance. We should be granted access to the job network.

The final problem is with travel. Because I am considered independent I am not eligible for travel assistance, being from Alice Springs it is incredibly difficult to get home, the airfares have admittedly become a lot cheaper later since Virgin Blue started flying there, but it fluctuates and often is too expensive. The Ghan used to be the only way to get home, but even that has become a lot more difficult since it now goes all the way to Darwin and has been filling up. All students who move away from home to study should be eligible for the travel subsidy.

Thankyou for taking the time to read about the problems I have faced at uni.  
Please have the courage to take the steps to eradicate student poverty in Australia.

Kind Regards  
David Pearson