

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing to express my concern about the changes to be made to the "Youth Allowance". I have observed over the last five years, while living in Pemberton WA, young adults being left behind while their friends head off to their university studies. When I have asked their parents why they are still here and not pursuing their degrees at Universities in Perth, they informed me of the current legislation where they must defer their studies for six months to work and be eligible for this "Youth Allowance." I always felt sorry for these students whose parents could not afford to pay all the expenses for their children to go to University in the city and therefore, rely on government funding which meant they were six months behind their classmates.

I have read in our local newspaper that the Rudd government is proposing to change this legislation which, from my understanding, appears to disadvantage rural youth more because the gap year could be up to two years in order to qualify for the "Youth Allowance."

I have two children heading into high school years and I am strongly opposed to the new changes proposed since it would mean my children may have to wait up to two years before they could pursue their university studies. There are some fundamental errors in this submission as it would mean the middle and lower socio economic families would be gravely discriminated against when trying to attain tertiary level qualifications.

1. Will the Universities allow these students to defer their studies for up to two years?
2. How many of these students, after working full time for two years will then keep their commitment to tertiary studies and go back to 4-5 years of study with little money?
3. All their friends whose parents can afford to support their children while studying in Perth will have nearly finished their degrees while they will be just starting.

If these changes are made, there will be a huge number of country students who will not take the tertiary line because it is out of their reach. This legislation would result in a less educated population, increase the problem of rural poverty and discriminate against the classes, so that only families from wealthy backgrounds could afford tertiary education. I do not want my children to be disadvantaged because we choose to live in rural WA.

With kind regards,



Michele Schmidt

