



Secretary
Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs,
P.O. box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600

Dear Secretary,

I write to express how disappointed I am that the Government has seen fit to increase the eligibility criteria for students to earn youth allowance when attending tertiary education.

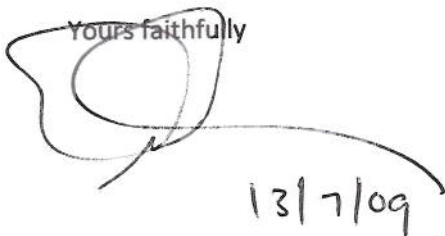
The decision has severely reduced the ability for country kids to attend university or higher education. Country students are already disadvantaged in that they must, on top of their educational costs, come up with more than \$200 per week extra to move to the city to enable them to attend university. City kids have a distinct advantage in this regard.

In my case my daughter, who badly wanted to finish school and go directly to University took a gap year, found a part time job in Kapunda and another in the next town some 40 kms away to enable her to qualify for the allowance. No employer wants to take on and train a full time employee when they know they will lose them to university a year later. Government should be aware that jobs are very very hard to find in country towns! The rug has now been pulled out from under our feet. The youth allowance was the critical factor in enabling her to live in Adelaide and attend university. We cannot afford to pay her total living away from home costs. It is even worse for parents who have more than one child at university.

I know that an educated country is a wealthy and healthy country and if kids who do not live in cities have another hurdle placed in front of them then fewer will attend university. Government tries to encourage professionals to move to country towns but disadvantaging their children will be another reason that they will not go.

Secretary, it is critical that the qualifying criteria for the allowance is NOT changed and that people who live in country areas are afforded the same opportunities as people who live in cities. I urge you to look after all Australians.

Yours faithfully



13/7/09

SCOTT EARLE