

July 7th 2009



Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education

To Whom It May Concern,

Re Changes in Youth Allowance

I am writing to you to express my deep concern about the prospective legislative changes in the Youth Allowance. My daughter Katherine completed Year 12 at the end of 2008 and started working straight after the exams so as to qualify for Youth Allowance during her 2009 Gap Year. Her intention was to begin Masters in Podiatry at Bundoora Latrobe campus in 2019 and to live on campus. The proposed changes will affect Katherine financially and has thrown into doubt, whether she will pursue this dream. As a mother, who has encouraged, supported and seen the many hours of study Katherine has devoted to achieving her goal of securing a university placement, we are devastated that the Government has ignored many students especially country students. Regional students are already under represented in tertiary institutions and are now being asked to further sacrifice their career aspirations

The retrospective nature of proposed changes is unfair because:

*18 Months qualification proposal is unreasonable (30 hours a week? Can only defer for a year, jobs etc)

*Parent income test threshold \$42,559 unrealistic

*Decrease of \$10,300 is over a four year degree when you replace the existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship with new Relocation Scholarship/ big disadvantage for rural & regional people as they have to leave home to study.

*Longer deferment time (2 years) will lead to fewer going ahead with study. (Formerly 15 hours a week or a bit less was doable for most students in their first year at University, now changed to 30 hours a week in an 18 month is unrealistic)

*Youth labour market in regional areas is already stretched in this economic climate.

I urge the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education opportunities to vote against these unfair proposed changes. Katherine is one of many students who are disillusioned with this Governments decision.

Yours faithfully,

Fiona Flanagan
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