



The Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs,
P O Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/ Madam,

As a parent of two students at Port Lincoln High School, we would like to register our concern and disappointment with regards to the proposed changes to Youth Allowance as announced in the 2009 Budget.

The proposed changes would severely affect our ability to support our children to attend Tertiary Education in the city. As our eldest child is now in Year 12, it will definitely affect his chances of seeking further education along with his brother in future.

Financially: The cost of supported accommodation or sharing rental accommodation would be very high. We would also need to know our children are in 'safe' accommodation. Rental properties are very difficult to come by as the rental climate in Adelaide is really tight. Landlords would also be reluctant to take on a group of students without any previous rental history. This would mean we would have to look at supported accommodation or trying to buy a unit/flat/house, both options giving us severe financial disabilities, as we would still have to fund our home in Port Lincoln. We would in effect be running two households.

On top of this we would have HECS fees, food allowance, book fees and general living expenses which would be seriously out of our reach without the Youth Allowance as it is now, being taken into consideration. We may also have to buy a car for our son, as he may have rental accommodation that is not on a bus route, or be near his place of study.

The proposed idea of school leavers being able to secure work for a minimum of 30 hours per week over a 2 year period does not take into consideration the fact that full-time work and even part-time work is getting harder to find. The added difficulty is that tertiary institutions are not able to defer courses for more than one year. This will deter country students from applying for positions, and by the time 2 years is up they may not have the enthusiasm to apply. If the obstacles become too great, then we will have less and less country students apply for tertiary education.

Country centres really need professionals to live in their midst. It is well know that country students who gain their professional qualifications are more likely to return to the country to use these skills and enhance the life of their regional centre. I f the proposed changes to Youth Allowance are accepted, we will have a greater shortage of professionals moving to our country centres, where we are already 'stretched' in many areas.

Please recognise that the financial cost of students leaving home to attend tertiary education in the city, or even interstate, depending on their course, will severely affect country students and parents, and indeed their communities in the long term.

Please leave the independent Youth Allowance as it is, especially for rural students! Why change something that has worked well for so many years and something that has indeed encouraged students to gain some experience in the 'work' world. Thereafter, they can apply their experience of working to their further education aspirations. This model could continue to benefit society in many positive ways.

Yours sincerely,

