

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in response to the Federal Government's plan to change to criteria for gaining independent status for the purpose of Youth Allowance.

I understand there is an issue concerning the current system with many people currently receiving Youth Allowance under this criteria being from high-income families. However these proposed radical changes will affect thousands of regional and rural students higher education aspirations. Making it nearly impossible for such a large majority of Australian youth to attend university or TAFE.

Currently I am taking a gap year off from university in order to gain independence, which will financially enable me to attend university. As it is situated over 700km from my home and family. Being one of four children my parents would not be able to financially support me whilst studying. Making Youth Allowance payments is the only way that higher education would be financially possible for me. Many of my classmates and fellow regional students are in the same position, leaving our plans for higher education in limbo.

The announcement of the government's plans to introduce the Student Start-Up Scholarship is a slight positive in such a negative change for regional and rural students. The proposed \$2,254 dollars a year would cover books and living for a mere nine weeks. Very little compared to assistance for an entire year to cover rent and food.

Independence Status allows a full payment of Youth Allowance every fortnight. This money is just enough to cover a fortnightly rent bill at in an Adelaide college. The payments based upon your parental income can be severely less, leaving the student and their family to make up the difference. It is not reasonable to expect a full time student to work a minimum of 15 hours a week just to cover their rent and food bills.

This Government obviously does not have the best interest of this country's future in mind if it plans to make such a stressful experience for regional and remote students even harder. We need more encouragement for higher education, not less.

