

The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary  
Education Opportunities**

I make this submission in particular addressing Terms of Reference items c,d and e.

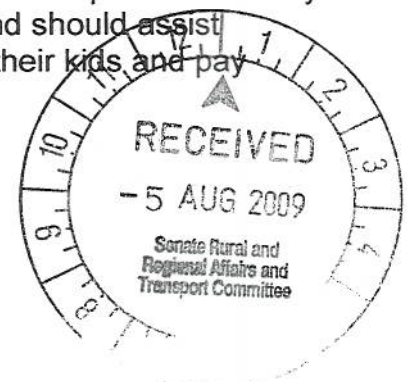
Rural and Regional students are disadvantaged severely by the proposed changes to Youth Allowance. In particular the rural students currently in their gap year who have chosen a course of action based on government rules of the day. In particular I am making this submission to express my concern and anger over the recent budget and proposed changes to the independent qualifying criteria for Youth Allowance for regional kids.

The Government proposes to remove the criteria "you have been out of school for at least 18 months and have earned at least 75% of the maximum rate of pay... in an 18 month period (approx \$19,500)", from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2010.

This will affect thousands of secondary school leavers and mid-course students who are currently working a GAP year this year (2009) to qualify and apply for independent Youth Allowance in May/June 2010. These students have planned their studies, income and lifestyle after finishing secondary school last year assuming that they are doing the correct thing in order to qualify for Youth Allowance.

I have taught my kids not to change the rules in the middle of a game and to not go back on what they have in place without warning, but this is what the government are planning to do - without warning. My kids would have chosen a different course of action if they knew the government was planning to pull the rug from underneath them – mid year.

They are now left uncertain if they can commence their chosen University course in 2010. We are not talking kids from super-affluent families that the Government like to portray, but kids from the country who have to move to the city to take up their chosen course. These kids take a GAP year to work and earn money to save for University expenses and qualify for Youth Allowance. Country kids and their families are up for much greater expenses when they move to the city to study, accommodation being a huge part of this, up to \$200.00 per week. They need this Youth Allowance to survive, yes parents can and should assist financially but what average family can afford to support their kids and pay



around \$400.00 per week for rent and food not to mention fees, books and other incidentals. Even if the student has part time work, there is a fine line between the amount of hours they can work which will not affect their studies and put huge stress on them. Without Government assistance, it becomes virtually impossible to fully support a child who has had to move away to University.

These kids who have done the right thing and planned their future, want to study to better themselves and are now left in limbo. I don't agree with this change at all, but why does it have to be introduced without warning for this wave of students. Surely students should be given sufficient warning that this policy is changing and then be able to plan their income and studies. This change should exempt country kids at best, or at least not be introduced until the next financial year.

This is a huge concern for our children and their future. The Government needs to know that these kids are being treated unfairly.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. M. J. H.', written in a cursive style.