

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

RE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO YOUTH ALLOWANCE

Dear Sir / Madam,

Thanks to the 70's education revolution, I was the first child in my family to attend university. Both my parents left school after completing Grade 8 to live and work for their family.

My 21 year old daughter who worked hard all through her schooling, achieved a UAI of 96.4, took a GAP year, worked in a volunteer program at The National Epilepsy Centre in the UK for 9 months and full-time at the local abattoirs in Victoria on the 'kill' floor for 5 months. She did qualify for Youth Allowance and because of her hard work she was accepted into her preferred course of Biomedicine at Melbourne University. She is able to finance half of her accommodation costs. We pay the remainder. She studies hard; is a high achiever in her course and hopes to specialize in Genetics.

My 19 year old son, also worked hard at school and achieved a UAI of 94.6. He deferred from Arts at Melbourne Uni so that he could work full-time at North Albury Tyrepower in 2009, allowing him to apply for Youth Allowance in 2010 which would make it possible for him to study at The University of Melbourne. However, unlike his sister, he may not get that opportunity to do what he actually wants to do. His decision to defer was based on the legislation of the time. Changing the legislation drastically affects the students who did defer in 2009.

If the government's proposed changes to the Youth Allowance goes through, Angus will have the choice of continuing as a tyre fitter for another year, earning \$10 per hour or apply to do Arts at Latrobe University in Wodonga where the cut-off point is 65 and continue to live in the family home. Not quite the intellectually challenging and independent life he had hoped for.

Two children, different opportunities. Perhaps my son will be the first of his generation of cousins not to go to University. Is this the type of person the government wanted to disadvantage? I don't think it is. I don't think they have thought through all aspects of this proposed legislation and I think our country actually needs more kids like Angus Lingham to go to Uni sooner rather than later. And they should have the choice of going to a Uni in a major capital city if they want to because they are entitled to exactly the same opportunities as their city counterparts.

Please amend this proposed legislation. Country kids should not have their choices reduced simply because they are country kids or they were born one year too late. I was luckier than my son.

Yours truly,

Belinda Lingham

