

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Youth Allowance.



As an isolated farming family, our children need to leave home (Giffard West Vic.) and live in Melbourne to attend University. We have a daughter currently in yr 11 who planned to work for a gap year before attending University. If these proposed changes are brought in she will now have to work for 2 years before qualifying for Youth Allowance. Many university courses can only be deferred for one year and 2 years is a long time for an 18 yr old to put off further study without losing motivation and knowledge.

Currently University of Melbourne Colleges cost in the order of \$17,000 pa. This is how much it is costing another daughter who is in 2nd yr university and living at Queens College Melbourne Uni. She has qualified for Youth Allowance, works a part time job and we help pay the remainder of the accommodation and other expenses.

These proposed changes to Youth Allowance disadvantage rural students, who are already under represented, in achieving university education. My brother lives in Sydney. All 3 of his boys have lived at home while they completed their degrees at little extra cost to their parents. When my 3 girls have all finished their degrees we will have incurred accommodation costs in the order \$153,000 and that is just for 3 year basic degrees. This expense is prohibitive to many rural families and will be very difficult for us even with the partial assistance of youth allowance. As farmers, both with part time off farm jobs, I do not believe we will qualify for assistance under the proposed changes.

Rural families are at a huge financial disadvantage in sending their children to University. These proposed changes to Youth Allowance only further discriminate against rural Australians desperate to provide a level of education equal to their city cousins.

Please reconsider these changes and make equality of access to education for country students.

Yours sincerely

Nicki Jennings