

To the Minister of Education,

My name is Alexis Killoran and I live near a tiny town called \_\_\_\_\_ in Gippsland. I am a rural student currently deferring my university studies for this year in order to qualify for the Independent Youth Allowance. I have been offered a place at Latrobe University, Bundoorah campus where I will be studying Environmental Sciences.

Due to the combined factors of my rural location and the current economic crisis I found it extremely hard to obtain a job for the first three months of my gap year. The local IGA supermarket, the biggest employer in the town closest to me, were uninterested in training someone who would shortly be leaving to attend uni. Other employers either shared the same opinion or offered only cash in hand jobs to an inexperienced young person such as myself, further lowering my already limited job prospects. In desperation I then turned to milking jobs, a less attractive option but one that offered "on the books" employment and an attractive pay rate. Getting up at quarter to four in the dead of winter every morning and finishing my days in the dark and cold every afternoon was at times a trial but I comforted myself with the thought that every completed milking brought me closer to earning the required \$18800.

However due to the slump in milk prices following the economic downturn, I found myself out of a job and once again desperate for work. Currently in my search for employment I have distributed 17 resumes, 8 to towns 30 and 75 km away (the two closest towns that offer the chance of employment) and have two part time jobs that total approx 22 hours a week and net me roughly 230 dollars. I am still looking for a third job as well as undertaking work training at a local pub once a week. Meeting the requirements for the Independent Youth Allowance was difficult as a rural student, but not impossible. The Bundoorah campus is 3.5 hours away and the simple fact is that I along with my two sisters will have to move to Melbourne in order to go to university there. The allowance would have helped immeasurably with expenditures such as rent and textbooks, supplemented with the part time job that I planned to obtain and fit around uni and study. However, due to the current proposed changes to the Youth Allowance I am simply not eligible and all my worry and work has been for nothing.

I still plan to attend university but due to the changes in the laws my time at uni will be much more of a struggle than previously thought. 30 hours a week in a permanent position is simply not a viable option for me and indeed for most rural students. I am deeply saddened by the fact that due to these changes, many of my classmates cannot afford to go to uni at all. As a rural student, I realized it was always going to be harder for me and my sisters to go to uni but changing the laws halfway through my gap year has made it immeasurably harder.

These new laws, rather than benefiting country students as they are meant to, are actually disadvantaging us more than ever before. I hate to think of all the dreams and potential of many country students being wasted simply because their families do not have the money to send them to uni. My fellow students and I have worked extremely hard, both academically and in employment, and I am deeply saddened by the fact that due to the proposed revision of the allowance, much of that effort may be in vain.

Yours sincerely, Alexis Killoran.

