



3rd August, 2009

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs & Tspt
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Sir

Re: Changes to the Youth Allowance Eligibility

I wish to express my concern to the changes that have been proposed in relation to the Youth Allowance Eligibility and the effect these changes will have the rural youth of this country.

In regard to the Senate inquiry and terms of reference, I wish to highlight the following:

1. Financial impact on rural and regional students. A high proportion of rural students currently defer their university course for 1 year and take up employment in order to afford to go to university. My daughter is one of these students who has gained a position to study physiotherapy and has taken a year off to be able to afford to go to university next year. I would further add that we are already paying accommodation and living costs for our son who is studying medicine. (again this course has to be undertaken at a university away from home), This we manage to achieve on an income of \$70,000 a year. Educating another child on this income is impossible. I would further add that the vast majority of people's incomes are not as high in rural areas compared to the city and this together with the distance to get to a university requires careful consideration in light of the proposed changes.
2. Education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in rural areas. I am not sure what is currently available so I cannot make any comment on this subject.
3. Implications of existing and proposed Government measures on prospective students. The existing system has been working reasonably well for a number of years and students can plan to take a year off study in order to afford the course of their choice. The proposed changes will change the opportunity for many students and they will have to change their plans and not

- obtain a tertiary education of TAFE skill. The effect may also create unemployment in the rural youth of this country.
4. Long and Short term impact of current and proposed Government policies on regional university and TAFE enrolments. Many regional universities are struggling with filling students places. As the vast majority of these students come from the rural community and overseas, there will be a greater strain on these universities and colleges which will possibly close and this will create further unemployment in a regional area.
 5. Adequacy of the Government to provide for students who are required to leave home. The Youth Allowance assuming you are eligible is certainly not adequate. Most students who live on Youth Allowance alone are often on the poverty line.
 6. Education needs of rural and regional students. Surely students living in the rural parts of Australia should have the same opportunities to study as city children. If for instance we lived in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide or Perth, our children could live at home and study in the course of their choice in their home town. In this situation they would not require Youth Allowance as they would be able to live at home
 7. Impact of Government measures and proposals on regional communities is quite simple, high achieving students will not have the opportunity to gain a tertiary education and will be left to find employment locally.

Please consider this proposal, it is the lifeline for so many country kids to gain an education. If we are such a clever country, why are we not giving every able and willing child the opportunity to achieve.

Yours faithfully,