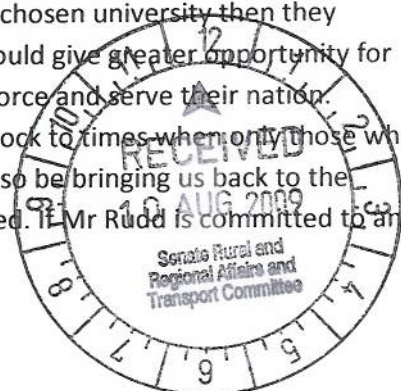


My name is Benjamin Keightley and I am making a submission to the enquiry into the changes to the Youth Allowance Independence selection eligibility criteria to express my opposition to the changes. I have much reason to oppose the changes which I will elaborate upon below

1. I finished my school education on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and it was at that point, I went out to look for a more full time position on and it was about 2 weeks later that I acquired one at our local Coles Supermarket. At that time I was going in on good faith that if I worked for one year and made around 18000 dollars I would be classed as independent and be able to receive Youth Allowance when I began to attend university in 2010. However, months after I have made my deferment I make the discovery that the Rudd Government had made the plan to scrap the current independence criteria as of January 2010 which effectively make me ineligible to receive Youth Allowance once I began attending university. This blew a huge hole in my plans and my parents plans as well. I had planned to do this "gap" year so that I could take the pressure off my parents, because they are business owners and they are battling the worst economic downturn in three quarters of a century as are many other small business owners around the country. This Allowance was how I intended to get through university to pay for my rent and my food as my university has no on-campus accommodation.
2. I come from a rural town of about 10000 people, the universities that offer my course (Bachelor of Occupational Therapy) are 3 or more hours drive away from my home town of Inverell. There are many travel costs that are incurred and then I have to pay to live away from home and then there are a whole raft of costs that come from living out of home and going to university. It is not as if I am a person who is living in a city and the university is a short drive or walk from my house where I have worked, lived with my parents for a year and receive my allowance as pocket money. The Youth Allowance which I was under the belief that I would be receiving would be spent on rent, food, travel and the other necessities that would be needed to get me through university. Mr Rudd only appears to be singling out what I would call a minority and greatly disadvantaging a majority of people who genuinely need an allowance such as this.
3. I am an honest, hard working person. I want to go to university because I want to excel myself and push myself in every way possible to being the best Occupational Therapist that I possibly can be. I do not like how the Rudd Government has decided to target what I would consider a minority who are cheating the youth allowance system for easy and free money while there are people out there who really need it, like myself and many other people that are from my school class and abroad across the nation who do not have easy access to education and need allowances like this to get them to university. If the Rudd Government plans to take this allowance away which was such a backbone to the rural university education, then I ask that he come up with some sort of rurally-minded university access scheme that is means tested based on distance from their chosen university e.g. if a particular student lives more than 100km away from their chosen university then they qualify for this allowance. Some sort of scheme like this would give greater opportunity for country kids to get a tertiary education, get into the workforce and serve their nation. Stopping this allowance would essentially be turning the clock to times when only those who had access to university had the chance to go, and it will also be bringing us back to the times that university was only for those who were privileged. If Mr Rudd is committed to an



"education revolution" he will keep this allowance instead of returning this nation to the dark ages where only privilege means education. That is not what this nation is about today.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Keightley", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Keightley