

To whom it may concern

My name is Annalise Bagust and I am currently in my Gap year. I entered into my gap year with the informed understanding that through earning 19.5 thousand dollars in a 12 month period I would qualify for youth allowance. The proposed changes to the independence criteria for qualifying for youth allowance have made me ineligible to receive any funding for when I go to university next year, effectively blindsiding myself and many of my peers who also made an informed decision to defer university.

I live in Port Macquarie, NSW, a regional area, and at the beginning of this year I deferred a placement in the Medical program at the University of NSW in Sydney. To attend this program I will have to move, incurring substantial living costs not applicable to students from the city who may live at home while studying. As youth allowance must be received in order for any of the governments other proposed student funding to be received, the government has basically made no provision whatsoever for regional students who must relocate to attend university and whose parents earn too much for them to automatically apply but not enough to be able to afford the associated costs. Without any funding from the government I will not be able to afford to study medicine as I would have to relocate no matter what university I chose to attend.

Furthermore, this is also the case with many of my peers, and if no provision is made for regional students to be able to study courses they have to relocate for, fewer students will be able to afford university; parents will only be able to afford to send one child to university while others will miss out and most significantly; The professionals most likely to work in regional areas after becoming qualified, that is those originally from regional areas, will not be given the opportunity to train, and eventually the shortages we already feel, for example that of doctors, will become greater still.

As a base measure, the starting date of these reforms should be pushed back to at least 2010 to make provision for those students who already made their decision based on the then current policy. If the changes must then be made, they must take into account the needs of students who need to relocate to attend university, particularly those from regional areas.

Regards
Annalise Bagust