

REQUEST FOR SENATE TO REDRESS SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR 2009 REGIONAL TERTIARY STUDENTS IN CURRENT GAP YEAR DUE TO ARBITRARY WITHDRAWAL OF YOUTH ALLOWANCE

FOREWORD: I emailed Julia Gillard on 22 May to point out the seriously discriminatory way the withdrawal of living-away allowance affects many rural & regional tertiary students in the current gap year. In reply I got a departmental email merely recounting the broad aims of the Bradley report! It in no way responded to the particular issue (heading above) which I raised.

I urge the Senate as a matter of serious concern to redress this unjust issue arising from the proposed legislation.

TO RECAP THE ISSUE: The withdrawal of Youth Allowance is a devastating let-down for current-year rural and regional students who've been accepted for a university place in 2010 where they'll need to live away from home because their chosen course is not available at a regional university.

These students, following previous advices from government, Centrelink and teachers, had planned ahead and are now irreversibly committed, having deferred their tertiary start year and found employment, under diminishing job opportunities, to earn enough to qualify for the allowance.

They now, halfway through implementing their advice-based plans for 2009, suddenly find the government moving the goal posts. Because of such ill-conceived government timing, a whole year of these students' tertiary studies now threatens to be foregone - a year of their lives wasted!

(My own granddaughter, who can only go for her chosen medical science studies at Monash campus in Melbourne and not at Latrobe campus in her home town Bendigo, must therefore live away from her home. She continues working hard in two jobs to hopefully qualify for the allowance!) This is but one example. There are many others. Many can't defer a second time. Many will drop out. This is totally false economy!

Also, the government, by not keeping faith with current gap-year arrangements which were already agreed between it and the cream of Australia's rural and regional students, has arguably breached its contract and has certainly contradicted the spirit of its much-vaunted Education Revolution!

URGENT REQUEST FOR A FRESH REVIEW AND POSITIVE RESOLUTION OF THIS ISSUE: The need to cut costs is not in debate. The serious predicament these young people now find themselves in may well be due to an error of omission, not commission. Surely the best way ahead is based on phasing out, not suddenly cutting out, the youth living-away allowance for rural and regional students so affected. At least, let the current year's crop through under the arrangements they've committed to, and pay them next year the allowance they have been working so hard for.

PLEASE GIVE THIS REQUEST THE MOST URGENT CONSIDERATION.

Yours sincerely,

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