

To the Senate Committee,
We would like to make a submission into the current enquiry into youth allowance.

We are middle income parents of a university student currently attending Latrobe Uni in Melbourne. The financial impact this has had upon our family has been immense and at times stressful as we try to juggle our budget to cover his expenses. Our weekly family income is about \$1,100 nett and by the time you cover our other expenses for the 2 adults & 2 children still at home there isn't much change left over. Financially he is totally dependent on us for his accommodation, meals, personal needs, text books, & transportation to/from home in the holidays. We have taken the cheaper option of having him live on campus but even this isn't that cheap.

The closest university to home is 130 kms away one way. If our son went here he would still have to live on campus, and our expenses would still be approximately the same. He doesn't have a licence, and the distance would make it impractical for him to come home every day even if he was able too. Hence there is really no other alternative for him.

The current government measures do not allow him to get any financial assistance at all because our family income is above the cut off limit. He didn't want a gap year as he would be unable to earn the \$19,532 required by being employed locally as there are limited jobs available that he could apply for.

The proposed government measures are totally unreasonable for our other two children, one of which is in Year 11 now because again, there is no employment in our town. In recent months we have had 2 major employers retrench staff because of the economic downturn due to the global recession and drought.

With the continual financial burden, lack of local employment on regional families and prospective students, universities will notice a significant downward trend in enrolments.

The educational needs of rural/regional students should be on an even playing field with their city counterparts and they should be considered independent and automatically qualify for any youth allowance available as they must move away from home to pursue tertiary studies. Students from the city have many choices of courses and tertiary institutions that they can attend within a reasonable distance from their home.

The impact of these government measures and proposals on rural/regional communities is that the young people move away to study and usually do not come back after getting their degree. Hence leading to a skill shortage in the highly qualified positions (i.e. medicine education and law,) in their home towns. The flow on effect being an ageing population and distinct lack of educated young people within the town who could contribute to the economic viability of the town in future years.

Barbara and David Smith