

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my sincere and grave concern regarding the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance which currently provides some support for students intending to study at university. I am a widow with three children; and I am employed as a School Counsellor with the NSW Department of Education and Training. I serve a range of schools within the Tamworth district (and love my job!). My husband passed away from cancer in 1999 and I have striven to support my children as fully as I am able throughout that time. My eldest daughter went straight to university in 2005 after completing her schooling. She is currently doing a PhD research project at the UNSW Social Policy Research Dept. Fortunately, due to her diligence and excellence, she was awarded a scholarship to undertake this research. Together with some part-time employment, she is funding her own daily needs etc. My second daughter worked hard for 12 months following school and is now studying Science/Social Science at UNSW. She was eligible for the YOUTH Allowance and utilises it, together with some financial support from me, to pay her fees, accommodation in college fees, and costs associated with textbooks and other costs. She has little or no spare cash at any time. My youngest child is a boy aged 18 who completed his HSC in 2008. His aim has always been to become a Paramedic/Nurse and he has been accepted into the double degree program at Charles Sturt University Bathurst to do this. During this year, 2009, he is working in the town to earn the money needed in order to qualify for the Youth Allowance payment. He has worked at the local lamb abattoir, as a Teacher's Aide in a School for Special Purposes, and in retail at two local shops. He has a work ethic and a desire to do something worthwhile. In his case, if he is no longer eligible for the Youth Allowance support payment, it will definitely make his situation and our situation as a family a very difficult one in the years to come. I may have to consider working evenings in order to help my children and I daresay he will have to consider part-time work just to supplement what I am able to give him by way of support. This will seriously impact on his ability to attend fully to his studies and his academic workload, not to mention anything about his emotional/social health and wellbeing.

I fully support the concept of examining the present system and making changes which will benefit those who most need it. Such changes may impact on young people formerly eligible for Youth Allowance who perhaps did not need it so much. These people include young university students living at home with parents/carers who presumably provide for and support them in their daily needs. However, I vehemently oppose changes which will affect children like my son who lives in a rural area and is not able to access his chosen university course unless he leaves home and lives in a college/boarded house situation. The costs associated with this must be met by parents like me; and without any government assistance for accommodation, food and the like this is a most difficult situation.

Please consider carefully the situation for young people who are not able to live at home and be supported by parents. For these young people, education should be accessible and attainable. It should not

be the province of the wealthy and advantaged. My children are fine young people who value their education and wish to put something back into their community, their society. They should be supported to do so!

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Ruth Jenkins