

The Chairperson,  
Independent Youth Allowance Inquiry

I write to register my deep concern about the recent changes made to the Independent Youth Allowance eligibility criteria. While the changes have some good points, they seriously affect the students who are currently in the middle of their "gap" year.

My son is one of the many students who completed VCE in 2008 and was accepted into a science degree at The University of Melbourne. We live 150Km from Melbourne and there is no closer campus that offers the course.

Considering it will cost \$15K to \$20K to live and study in Melbourne, he decided to defer this year to work and earn the amount that qualified him for the Independent Youth Allowance.

At the time he deferred, this was a legitimate and accepted method of gaining some income support while at university. Now the government is proposing to radically change the requirements after he is in the middle of his deferment period. It is extremely unfair to existing students to retrospectively apply this change. Had there been some warning of this change, he would probably have made a different decision.

If the Australian government wants a highly educated population they need to support our young people not place obstacles in their way. We need more scientists, engineers and business leaders to build this country and continue the proud traditions established by our forebears. If the eligibility criteria really must be changed, then it should not be done retrospectively. Those students already in their deferment year should NOT be affected. The start date for this change MUST be deferred at least a year.

Yours Sincerely,

**David Atkinson MIEAust CPEng**