

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs & Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600  
ACT  
2<sup>nd</sup> August 2009

Dear Sir

We are writing to voice our concerns regarding the proposed changes to Youth Allowance particularly the criteria relating to independent status. We feel these changes will unduly impact on our youth and especially those in rural areas. It will significantly disadvantage rural students who have to live away from home to attend university. We would ask you to carefully consider this issue before changes are made.

Our concerns are:

1. The 2008 HSC students have made their career, course and university admission based on the criteria which was existing at the time which made them eligible for Youth Allowance.
2. The availability of work for 18 year olds in rural and regional areas to an equivalent of 30 hours. We have three daughters undertaking a Gap year to assist with the huge cost of university. They are currently working three jobs each but still have weeks where the total hours is less than 30 hours. We are fortunate to live within driving distance of a large regional centre; students in smaller regional centres would have great difficulty getting 30 hours/week work.
3. Rural employment is less constant with seasonal influences. For example work at harvest, impact of drought and floods. In Orange the hospitality industry is slower in the winter months. Our daughters work for a conference centre in March their average hours of work/week were 10 hrs, in June it dropped to 5hrs.
4. How will assessment of the 30 hours be undertaken? Is it an average? If you work 28 hours in a week and then 45 the next will the first week's hours be counted? What of students who are working at harvest who could work up to 80 hours a week but then not work for several weeks?
5. What is the system in place to calculate hours worked and the documentation of these hours? Students are already working towards getting the required hours and yet there is no information in place to guide them in the documentation they require.

The changes to Independent status for Youth Allowance needs careful consideration at the very least the change to 30 hours /week work should not be implemented in 2010. We look forward to hearing your deliberations on this topic.

Yours faithfully

Cas and Richard Ingham.