

Submission to the Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities

Dear Sir/ Madam

We wish to make known to the Inquiry the direct effects the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance will have on our family.

Firstly, we are a family of 5 children ranging in age from 19 to 12 living in Margaret River.

Our eldest son is currently studying Architecture at UWA after gaining a TER score of 94.8. He is in receipt of around \$420 in Youth Allowance and rent assistance per fortnight. Without this assistance he would be unable to afford to live in the city and study. Before taking up university study he took a gap year and diligently earned the money required to make him eligible for this allowance. He was aware of the requirements and planned to meet the requirements with success.

Our first daughter turns 18 on Sunday 9th August. After achieving a TER of 96.4 she has enrolled in Occupational Therapy at Curtin University and deferred. She too has planned her gap year and is well on the way to meeting the previously required parameters to gain Youth Allowance.

We, her parents and herself are OUTRAGED at the governments proposed changes for the following reasons;

- 1) They are simply unfair to the current cohort of students who have planned and worked diligently to meet the existing criteria.
- 2) Our daughter's (and subsequent children's) ability to study at tertiary institutions away from home will be severely compromised and may indeed be terminated.
- 3) To defer studies for the 2 years as required by the proposed changes is in many cases not an option offered by tertiary institutions. It is also overly onerous and in the current climate very hard on the candidates to expect them to secure employment for a 2 year period, especially in rural areas.
- 4) The proposed changes unfairly discriminate against country students as they do not have the luxury of staying at home while studying at a metropolitan campus.
- 5) Our tax dollars are being redirected away from a worthwhile and far sighted endeavour (i.e. the education and retention of our talented young) for a simple fiscal short term gain. This will surely have a negative effect in the long term.
- 6) The proposed changes, while introduced in light of the current global financial crisis and its effect upon the Government ignores the very same crisis and its effect on those seeking youth allowance and their ability to gain sustainable employment and meet the new criteria.

Thus, in short we find the proposed changes unfair, discriminatory, poorly thought out and to our children's disadvantage and ultimately to the long term detriment of Australia.

Yours in good faith

Philip and Geraldine Hoban