

Dear Ms Radcliffe,

I wish to submit the following:

While I welcome most of the recommendations in the Report, I would question why Recommendation 4 does not consider the Relocation Scholarship should be available to Austudy recipients. These students, dependent on income support payments, should not be discriminated against simply because they are over 25, or over 22 in 2012. If the Committee's intention, in recommending eligibility be extended to Independent Youth Allowance recipients, is to ensure people in the same circumstances have the same level of support, then Austudy recipients should have the same access to assistance with relocation and housing costs. This is particularly important for a single parent in my situation, as I can't reduce costs by living in share accommodation with other students when I need to relocate for study.

Also, the report refers to the disadvantage and anxiety experienced by Gap year students as a result of the reforms that have had a retrospective effect, and the uncertainty created. I wish to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that current students have also made decisions last year based on the availability of CAS, only to find they are now ineligible. For over two months I have been trying to get the conflicting information on DEEWR and Centrelink websites clarified, so I would know what my circumstances will be after the end of this year. These scholarships should not have been scrapped without notice, and grandfathering arrangements should be put in place to cover the transition period. Students in my position at Deakin, who have to transfer to remain on campus, have been denied the opportunity to access CAS because the information was only made available on the Deakin Scholarship page in August this year.

Finally, the same students affected by the changes to Scholarships, will be those most likely to be adversely affected by the delay in raising the income threshold. Even if a student obtains more hours of employment to meet accommodation costs in Melbourne (for example) they will have to wait til July 2011 for any benefit from this measure.

The combined impact of the abolition of CAS, ineligibility for the Relocation Scholarship, and delayed increase of the income threshold means I will need almost full time employment to meet basic living costs. I simply cannot afford to continue my education, and I can't imagine that I'm unique.

I realise my comments may be too late to be considered, but have sent them anyway on the slight chance that there will be a further review of some of these issues.

Thank you

Valerie Cookson