Senate Inquiry Submission

PROPOSED CHANGES TO YOUTH ALLOWANCE ELIGIBILITY

I am the mother of Year 12 student at The Hamilton and Alexandra College in the rural town of Hamilton, Victoria. I request that the proposed changes to the guidelines for the workplace participation requirements for students seeking an independent status for Youth Allowance as outlined for 2009 be reconsidered.

Being a sole parent of three children in secondary school, the pressure to keep my children in school and also help my son relocate to the city to university is beyond my abilities. I work full time, do not have any pension or health card and have an income of just over $44k. My son has worked hard at school obtaining many awards, including dux of his year for many years. He was to have a gap year next year and then on to university in 2011. A requirement of 18 months work will also affect any deferment as the universities will only hold their placement for twelve months. The added pressure of not knowing how we will be able to afford university has affected him this year. At this time he is not sure what to do next year.

Country students travel many kilometres every year to keep up with study requirements and attend lectures to achieve their required ENTER score. These students, once qualified in their particular field, may return to regional communities. If these students do not complete the university courses due the prohibitive costs of relocation, it will be regional communities that will suffer.

Changes to the Youth Allowance will highlight the issues of rural students pursing further education. Many metropolitan students do not need to leave home and have family support close. I feel that there needs to be an allowance to tertiary education from regional areas as these country students will truly be independent.

Please reconsider the proposed changes and give our rural students the opportunity to access and complete their tertiary education and benefit regional communities.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Williams