

To whom it may concern,

I am an 18 year old student currently undertaking my gap-year in order to qualify for Youth Allowance in 2010, to assist with the cost of going to University. However with the changes proposed to the Youth Allowance, I am no longer eligible. I was the Dux of Manjimup Senior High School in 2008, but am now struggling to find the means to go to University in 2010. I live approximately four hours south of Perth, thus will have to move out of home in order to attend, and without the Allowance that so many rural students have been counting on, I will struggle to find sufficient funds.

I, and so many other students undertaking their gap-year at the moment, am struggling to find the steady amount of work required to be eligible for the new Youth Allowance criteria. Due to the current economic situation, my current job at a nursery, will be terminated in a few weeks, leaving me unemployed, along with at least fifty other people in my town working at either FPC nursery or Wapress. I began working at this nursery with the mindset that my casual position would not affect my eligibility for Youth Allowance, as I have managed to earn the amount necessary under the old system. However due to this criteria being taken away and replaced by the 30hour week over 2 years, I am far from qualifying. Thus I am now facing a daunting job search which will most likely eventuate in my moving away from my hometown and living independently to find work in the city. This in itself should qualify me and many other rural students for independence. However, not all students in my position will take such action. Many of my peers have decided that they may not go to University at all this coming year, despite undertaking their TEE and going through the application process last September. Surely the Government must be concerned that this proposal is turning people away from University, thus creating a less educated work force for years to come, and putting a larger strain on the unemployment our country is already struggling with.

At the very least, the changes should not affect the students who graduated in 2008, who are already over halfway through their gap year. I understand the current economy means the Government wishes to cut the costs associated with the Youth Allowance, however the changes should not affect the rural students, or at least those who have had no warning as to such changes. I know of people who live in Perth with their parents, who do not pay rent or utilities, but receive Youth Allowance due to their undertaking of a gap-year in previous years. It is here, where the changes should be implemented, to prevent people receiving the money who are not in dire need of it. It is not the rural students who should be punished.

I hope these words from someone directly affected by the changes will have an impact on the final decision.

Yours sincerely,
Karina Hanrahan