

20th May, 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in relation to the changes made, in the recent budget, to Youth Allowance for university students.

Last year I completed my Higher School Certificate. Knowing I wanted to study a course in Nutrition at university, I worked hard to complete Year 12 to the best of my ability and achieved a relatively high standard. I was offered a place at the University of Canberra in their Human Nutrition Course.

Once my university offer was made, I was unsure whether or not to take a gap year. I sought advice from my careers advisor, teachers, parents and checked conditions for deferment with the university. I contacted Centrelink to see whether I would be entitled to Youth Allowance and also what I needed to do to qualify for this benefit.

After much thinking, I decided to take a year off from study, to earn money, gain new skills, independence and ultimately support myself through my chosen university course. Whilst still at school, I applied for a \$1000 scholarship from the local Lion's Club. I was successful with this application but was unable to accept the scholarship once I decided to defer my university offer.

I have been lucky enough to find full-time employment as a receptionist at a solicitor's office in town and also work on a casual basis behind the bar at a local pub. These incomes, along with money I earned working in a variety store before being employed full-time would, previous to the budget announcement, have allowed me to earn sufficient money to be eligible for Youth Allowance midway through my first year of university, in 2010. Since the budget announcement, I will no longer be able to access Youth Allowance and feel this is unfair considering I made my decision based on a different set of rules.

Had I have known these changes were going to occur and I would not qualify for Youth Allowance, I would have definitely gone to university this year. I do not want to take two years off and in order to take up my deferred offer, I must go to university at the beginning of 2010. I feel cheated by the government's new set of rules.

I am aware that you are looking into this matter and thank you for your time and support of my circumstances. I hope you are able to help my situation and eagerly await the results of your investigations.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth Hair