

06/08/09

To whom it may concern,

My name is Clea Haarburger and I live in the rural town of Traralgon in South-east Victoria. I'm nineteen years old and last year I graduated from St Pauls Anglican Grammar School in Warragul. I worked hard in school especially in my final year to achieve a score that allowed me to gain a place at the University of Melbourne in their Bachelor of Arts degree. To be able to afford to move and live in Melbourne I made the decision to defer my university placement to undertake a 'gap year' during 2009 so I could work and become eligible to receive youth allowance support payments in 2010 when I would begin my course. I went to Centre link and asked what was required of me to become eligible and I was informed that I needed evidence of income over a period of 18 months and that the previous amount of earning required had increased from approximately \$18,000 to approximately \$19,500. I have two part-time jobs in which I work hard at and if I continued working the hours that I currently am, I would be likely reach the target previously asked of me. What I honestly can not understand is how the Australian Government has so easily overlooked the rural population of Australia. They claim the new scheme is so that help is going to those who need it, but this new scheme makes me highly question whether I can even go to university.

This new requirement of 30hrs per a week is hard to come by given the current economic situation and there is a scarce amount of jobs available, especially in rural areas. Through my two jobs yes, I am doing over 30hrs a week, but I have not the entire time since I have finished school, which means I would have to work 30hrs a week well into 2010 to be eligible. I could not work full-time hours whilst attending university full-time so in fact, as a government you are asking the year 12's of 2008 to give up our university placements. Furthermore if next year I attended university without youth allowance support payments I would have to live at home, requiring me to travel approximately 4-5hrs per a day just to attend what may be a 2hr lecture. Even with youth allowance payments I would still have to work part-time during my degree to support myself, as my parents do not have the money to support me. Furthermore, anything I save from working this year, would then have to be spent on my expenses next year if I didn't have support payments, which MAY cover my first year, but what about the following FOUR years of my degree? The truth is in many cases, if we as rural students want a good education in the course that we wish to study often we have to move to the city to get it, and the truth is this new scheme for youth allowance will prevent many of us, myself included, from doing so. You are ensuring in the long-term that less and less rural students attend university and you can be sure that you, the Australian Government is responsible for it.

I feel like I have been slapped across the face. I followed the advice of my career teachers and Centre link as to what I should do to be able to attend my course of choice. I worked hard, got my required ENTER, worked hard all this year to become eligible and now you have pulled the rug out from underneath me and have put a damper on my future. If this new scheme is not changed to begin for the following year and not half way during this year, then I can honestly say I will forever lose trust in the current Australian Government. If you can not see what damage you are doing then you are blind. Your actions now very much determine my future and whether or not I will get to attend university.

Regards,

Clea Haarburger