

To whom it may concern

I am an 18 year old country girl writing to you regarding the changes to the eligibility criteria for youth allowance. My father says that submissions are closed by now but I am writing anyway in the hope that my voice can still be heard! I would have written earlier but unfortunately i have just finished work for the day. The reason I am working this year instead of attending university is so that I can receive youth allowance next year. However with the changes that are proposed I wouldn't be receiving this youth allowance and therefor not attending university.

I was planning to move to Perth next year and study at Curtin university of technology. I live in a rural town which is 400kms away from the big city. Being a small town I found it difficult to find a job at the start of this year and it wasn't until May that I started working full time, or 30 hours a week. With the suggested changes, 18 months later puts me at November 2010, and of course that means I couldn't start university until 2011.

That means I would be a year later starting uni (my desired field - teaching), a year later finishing and a year later when I can be in my desired career. I am very keen to reach university, I am very much looking forward to it and I will get there; but I have no desire to remain a shop girl for another year and a half. There are many other rural students like me who have mapped out their futures: graduate yr 12, gap year and then off to the big smoke for university, but may not have the determination to wait out for two years to get there. I know four of my friends who have already decided that they aren't interested in going to university if the proposed changes eventuate.

Ok so four people isn't a huge number in the grand scheme of things. But there is a huge number of rural communities, and if these changes are brought in I am sure we would see a huge drop in university students from rural communities. The city kids have it easy; after graduation they move onto uni as if it were a new school, while still being able to live at home, still being connected to all their friends and family. Rural students have to move town, find a house, leave our family and friends behind, try and find our way around these big cities and manage our finances so that we can live! I don't understand why anyone would seek to make it even harder for us rural kids??!?!?!?!?

Please, do not change the youth allowance eligibility criteria!

Sincerely

Carina Dufty