

To the Committee involed in the Inquiry of Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

I completed the Higher School Certificate in 2008 at Hennessy Catholic College at Young in rural NSW. I aimed to study Chemical Engineering at university and so was forced to preference universities in metropolitan areas which were hundreds of Kilometres from my home. Unfortunately i did not receive the equivilant UAI, meaning i had settle for a Bachelor of Science degree at Sydney University. This meant that to meet the financial needs to attend university i defered my study until 2009, with a goal to aquire assistance through 'Youth Allowance.'

I started working soon after school finished (around about late november) at a cherry orchard where I earned roughly \$5000 in pay over 6 weeks working mainly form 7.30-5.00, 7 days a week. This left me well underway to earn the \$19500 of gross wage. After working at the cherry season, i found it hard to gain employment due to the economic climate, until late february when i gained another seasonal job at a prune orchard. From what i understand from the new policy of youth allowance, this gap in my employment would not allow me to be eligible for the assistance as i was not working for 30 hours or more a week.

After the few days work at the prune orchard, I had to search for a job again. I gained employment at Big W where i have been working since then. I started working on a casual rate, taking whatever work was avaiiable for me, there were only a few weeks where i was able to gain a complete 30 hours per week. Due to pay cuts in the Big W buisness, I was offered a contract for 20 hours a week. This again does not meet the criteria of working at least 30 hours a week. Knowning that I will have to gain extra employment to meet this criteria I am applying for a night job to gain these extra hours.

I am irritated that the 'rules have been changed half way through the game,' obviously not for the benefit of the many thousands of sudents that need this assistance to complete their studies. So, unless if these changes are re-thought and corrected I believe many defered students will be questioning how they will afford the financial burden of university. I know that I am threatened by this new set criteria and plea for it to be reconsidered.

Thankyou for taking the time to read this,  
Yours Faithfully,

Jamie Giacomini