

Uni forum overflows

Massive concern over new changes

By TINA LIPTAI

ABOUT 400 concerned students and parents packed Warrnambool's Civic Hall last night to hear the city's education leaders speak at a public forum about changes restricting Youth Allowance eligibility.

The South West Local Learning and Employment Network (SWLLEN) coordinated the forum to give people facts about the changes and direction on how to protest against them.

From January 2010, students will no longer be able to claim independence after working 15 hours per week for two years or earning \$20,000 in 18 months.

Instead, they will have to work 30 hours a week for 18 months.

The move is set to disadvantage about 30,000 students, many of whom live in rural and regional Australia.

While South West Coast MP Denis Napthine and Member for Wannon David Hawker were both apologies for the event — along with a number of senators, including Opposition edu-



An estimated 400 people filled the Warrnambool Civic Hall last night for the Tertiary Youth Allowance forum. 0906036W11 Picture: GLEN WATSON

cation spokesman Christopher Pyne — they all sent letters encouraging south-west residents to continue their fight against the proposed changes.

Two petitions circulated during the forum and will be presented to Parliament by Mr Hawker next week.

Speakers last night in-

cluded Deakin University Pro Vice-Chancellor Rural and Regional Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Warrnambool College principal Mary Pendergast and expert on the costs of attending university, Vince Callaghan.

Ms Pendergast urged students to make their voice heard by writing to poli-

ticians to tell their story. Among those in the crowd affected by the Federal Government's reforms was Jordan O'Keefe, who deferred his university place this year to work and qualify for Youth Allowance.

While it seems that may no longer be possible, the 19-year-old from Winslow

said he was still determined to study psychology in Ballarat next year. "It's gives me hope that people are working towards getting (the changes) fixed or stopping it happening," he said.

"I'll still definitely go (to university) but it (the changes) will make it a lot harder."

Plans in place to counter swine flu cases

By PETER COLLINS

SOUTH-WEST Victoria's largest hospital and aged care centre have stepped up their pandemic precaution plans to ward off a potential swine flu outbreak.

All visitors with influenza-like symptoms or those who have been near flu sufferers are being advised to stay away from South West

Healthcare's hospital and Lyndoch aged care complex.

Anyone with influenza symptoms has been advised to consult their own GP rather than seek treatment at the hospital's emergency wing. So far south-west Victoria has been untouched by the highly-contagious influenza, which has been contracted by 521 people, most from across Melbourne.

Lyndoch chief executive Rhys Boyle said the extra precautions had been introduced in the past week, including special hand-wash stations and visitor precaution signs.

"I will be writing to families of our residents advising them to stay away if they are unwell or to take precautions," he said.

"We developed the pan-

demie plan three months ago hoping we would never have to put it in place.

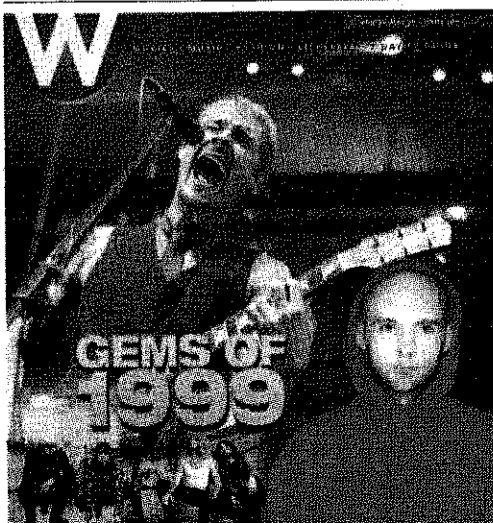
"Once a virus gets in it is very hard to control."

South West Healthcare community partnerships manager Suzan Morey said the hospital's influenza pandemic plan involved close monitoring and control by all departments to prevent an outbreak among staff and

patients. "It is important that people who are seriously unwell with flu should go to their own doctor and not our emergency department."

"And it is imperative they phone their doctor first to give them warning."

Warrnambool's municipal medical doctor of health, Dr John Philpot, said there had been no confirmed cases in the district.



NEW LOOK W

Beginning this week

- A more comprehensive 7-day TV Guide
- Great movie reviews
- Technology and internet news

NOTES

Independent Youth Allowance Forum

Wednesday 3 June 2009, 7.00 – 8.30pm

Civic Hall, Warrnambool Entertainment Centre

1. Welcome and introduction

Toni Hancock, CEO SWLLEN, opened the meeting by recognising the traditional owners of these lands.

She introduced notable dignitaries and panel members and welcomed community members to the meeting. Toni outlined the role of SWLLEN and explained the purpose of the meeting, being a reversal of announced changes for the current group of deferring students and a longer term recognition of “regional disadvantage” and issues associated with students needing to leave home to further their education.

She concluded by inviting all present to sign two petitions that were circulating - one in relation to current young people who deferred and will now not be eligible for the Independent Youth Allowance, and another recognising disadvantages for future students and seeking equal access to higher education.

1.1 Attendance

James Dennis – Chairman of the South West LLEN
Toni Hancock, CEO South West LLEN
Margaret Turner – (representing the Honourable David Hawker, Member for Wannon)
Nathan Anderson (representing Denis Naphine MP)
Panel Members: Vince Callaghan, (Author of “Can My Wallet Afford it?” and “Get Smart”)
Dr. Sue Kilpatrick (Deakin Uni Pro-vice Chancellor Rural and Regional)
Mary Pendergast (Principal Warrnambool College)
Secondary School Principals, Rob Porter (Brauer College), Shaun Smith (Emmanuel College),
Neil Benfell (Kings College), Joe piper (CEO SWTAFE), approx 300 Community members

1.2 Apologies

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, Leader of the Opposition
David Hawker, Federal Member for Wannon
Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education
Senators: Sarah Hanson-Young, Julie McGauran, Gavin Marshall, Judith Troeth,
Jacinta Collins, Stephen Conroy, Helen Krogen.
Vicki Johnson and Joy Downing, Community members.

2. Presentation (Linda Wilkie Bell)

a. Good News, Bad News

A summary of the proposed changes that would benefit and disadvantage students was presented by Linda Wilkie Bell. For further information, the audience was referred to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website:

www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransormingAustraliasHESystem.aspx

3. The Political Perspective

Linda encouraged the audience to visit the websites of Sarah Hanson-Young (The Greens Party, South Australia) and Hon Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training to view their Statements on the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance.

4. **Regional disadvantage – presented by Vince Callaghan**

Vince advised that he has been involved in regional issues including involvement with Senate and House of Representative enquiries over a long period of time. He listed a number of facts:

Fact 1 – Regional and rural Australian students are almost four times less likely to go on to tertiary education compared to their metropolitan counterparts, mainly because of cost, particularly if they choose a course not locally available.

Fact 2 – Staying at home does not substantially alter the family budget, but choosing to study away from home will cost in the vicinity of \$20,000 p.a. (not including HECS fees). Over the past 30 years of Vince’s involvement in student financial issues, the regional/rural disparity has not changed for the better.

In 1983, the Australian Vice Chancellor’s Committee, referring to regional students, wrote in a submission to government *“there should be a policy of financial assistance which will counteract the disincentives which are deterring many of our ablest young people from tertiary education”*.

In a report in 1988 to government entitled *“Three times less likely”*, there were similar recommendations.

In 1994, The National Board of Employment Education and Training stated in its report to government: *“As a matter of urgency, the Commonwealth, in close consultation with the States ... review the current financial assistance schemes and develop new guidelines specifically for financial assistance for rural/regional students undertaking tertiary education”*.

In 1999, Dr David Kemp, the Coalition Minister for Education, stated that *“there were huge regional disparities in participation rates”* and that this needed to be addressed.

The last serious attempt at reviewing student financial schedules was the *“Chapman Report”* in 1992. This report outlined the need to review rural/regional disadvantage.

All Governments, however, have failed to address these issues. Vince has travelled extensively around Victoria running workshops and is confronted by the huge numbers of families who attend these workshops looking for information and ways to get their students into further education.

The recent changes that have been announced by the Minister following the Federal budget have again not addressed the issue of regional disadvantage. Changing the rules half way through deferral years is insensitive and wrong, and students were not abusing the system. Regional students should not be pressured into deferring, at almost twice the rate of regional students, in order to become eligible for independent allowance. They need to have the opportunity to have equality of choice in comparison to their metropolitan counterparts. If student wish to defer for personal reasons, that is their choice, but they should not be pressured because of the cost of their education.

The underlying issue has again not been addressed by Government. They have increased the family allowance threshold and they have brought in a \$4000 Relocation Scholarship for year one and \$1000 in subsequent years. This replaces accommodation scholarships of over \$4,200 for each year of the course!

Action for regional disparity and disadvantage is well overdue. The relocation scholarship should be the same for the four years, not reduced in second and subsequent years.

The Government, which is committed to its *“Education Revolution”*, is urged to review its policies to ensure they are equitable and include ALL Australian students.

5. The Human Rights Perspective – presented by Mary Pendergast, Principal Warrnambool College

What we need:

- Remove inequity in the new policy;
- Remove barriers to fair access – the current threshold to combined income is too low;
- Afford every child the opportunity to access, on merit, their course of choice if it's not available locally;
- Create provision for current students who have deferred. The deferral year for regional students is working.

Mary cited the following publications:

In Article 26 – Education (United Nations) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 10 October 1948 states: (1) *Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.* (3) *Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*

Dr Dahle Suggett – Deputy Secretary, Office for Policy Research and Innovation, DEECD stated:

“The Blueprint for Education and Early childhood Development – highlights the importance of affording every child every opportunity to succeed in education, regardless of their location or socio economic circumstances”.

In the Youth Budget it states – *“The Compact with young Australians will keep young people at school or engaged in further education and training and will prevent many from experiencing long term unemployment* (Kate Ellis – Minister for Youth 2009).

By 2015 – 90% of young Australians will attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications (Page 2).

Education is a key building block for future growth – (Page 4)”

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians – December 2008

“Australian Governments commit to working with all school sectors to support the senior years of schooling and the provision of high quality pathways to facilitate effective transitions between further study, training and employment. Pge 12 MYCEETYA.”

Therefore, higher education is the minimum for a successful life.

World of New Skills – requires fair access to higher education.

- Knowledge Economy: Higher education soon a minimum expectation – can't be catered for fully in a rural setting.
- High levels of education will provide security in our change environment.
- Human Capital and Services the basis of future economies – each child will need to have the skills, knowledge and abilities to manage new work options.
- Diversity as a moral imperative – cater for difference in individual interest and capacity to guarantee a rich society.
- Equity as a practice in policy – create a platform for every child to fairly access their course of choice;
- Life Long learning – an expectation and requirement of this era – cost as a barrier is unfair

Mary made the following points to consider for Country Kids:

- Work while studying – this is not possible for some courses where they are virtually full time.
- Deferring: Many courses can only be deferred for one year and students will need to go through a process for applying again.

- Level of threshold: Families with an income band of \$43,000 - \$80,000 have great difficulty in trying to pay for a student living away from home. The threshold has to be reasonable and be adjusted for country kids.
- Finding 30 hours of work is not always possible for country students who have to defer.
- 2 years “gap” forced upon rural students
- Need provision in the policy which supports them having to relocate for the length of their course, for equity and fairness.

6. The University Perspective – presented by Dr. Sue Kilpatrick, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional), Warrnambool Campus, Deakin University

Sue made the following points:

- Many of the policies from the Bradley Review were adopted by the Government.
- About 40% of people aged between 25 – 40 should have a Bachelors degree by 2025.
- Regional areas have half the qualifications of metro students.
- 49% of current Youth Allowance recipients are living at home and are in the City.
- The Government says it wants more people in regional areas to access higher education, but they are making it more difficult to access higher education. This confusion will provide a case for regional provision.
- This issue will be raised in Canberra at a Universities meeting with Julia Gillard on Friday 12th June.
- The Health Lobby has been successful in gaining regional scholarships.
- There is more chance of attracting skilled people back to rural and regional areas if they originally come from a regional area.
- Deakin University (DU) is about providing skills for the region, and if the region is engaged, it means more business for DU.
- DU is concerned about the impact of deferral, with almost 37% of students deferring.
- Students trying to qualify for Youth Allowance will need to take twice as long, with more chance of them not returning to study. This is an issue for the whole regional economy.

7. Questions from the floor

- **Q:** There is Federal recognition for a Living Away from Home Allowance for apprentices and trainees – are regional apprentices valued more than regional students?
A: This is a good point to raise with Julia Gillard.
- **Q:** Recent research reported on ABC Radio stated that if you were taller you earned more income over the whole of your life – so is there a lifelong disadvantage for a lower level of education?
A: The Bradley Review quoted some figures that support graduates earn more over a lifetime.
- **Q:** Are the proposed changes passed already, or are they still proposals?
A: Not set in concrete as yet, still have to go through the House of Representatives. Senate Enquiry. SWLLEN is sharing information Australia wide, and we need to maintain or increase the groundswell to implement change. Campaigns are also running in other Victorian centres.
- **Q:** The continuing cycle of struggle for rural families to send their children to university, how long will it continue?

- **A:** This scenario will continue. Research has showed that HECS debts are generally not repaid by females until 46 y.o. and for males 42 y.o . It is usually a lifetime debt.
- **Q:** \$20,000 for students to live away from home – where do these figures come from?
- **A:** Vince: If students stay at home, the family budget does not change very much, but costs for living away from home for students depend on the type of accommodation chosen. University living is about \$18,000 p.a. Besides accommodation, there are food and other costs. Rental is usually based on a 52 week lease, with high rentals in the City, there is not much change out of \$15,000, then there is travel and food on top of the rental.
- Joe Piper, CEO South West TAFE, spoke on the amount of assistance required for students studying away from home and the impact on the local economy. He calculated that for about 1000 local students leaving home to study in the City, @ \$20,000 p.a., equates to \$20M out of the regional economy. Understanding the impacts of taking \$20M out of the local economy cannot be underestimated.
- **Q:** If students drop out of going to university, it affects the status and income of universities, so would the university consider allowing students to defer for 2 years instead of 12 months?
- **A:** Sue Fitzpatrick agreed this change would make it harder for universities to meet their targets, and may consider this change. She indicated that there are 58 students whose places are in jeopardy for next year. They are starting to think about running the first year of more Bachelor Degrees here, to get students accustomed to University study, and THEN encourage them to move away from home. Changes may take more than 6 months to be implemented, and could be 2011.

8. Presentation – Actions for Change (Toni Hancock)

a. 2009 Deferment

Students who deferred in 2009:

- Contact Senators to get them to pressure the Government to change the date for the introduction of the new criteria for independent status (yellow petition)
- Sign the circulated petition;
- Send the recommendation from this forum;
- These letters, notes and petition to be tabled in the Senate, in an effort to trigger an enquiry to prevent this proposed legislation from being enacted. Letters should be sent as attachments, not included in the body of the email.

b. Students who are regionally disadvantaged:

- Contact Senators so that they can push for changes in the Senate.
- Sign the circulated petition for the House of Representatives.
- Sample letters will go to Senators. Other letters are welcome.
- Letters should be sent as attachments, not in the body of an email.

9. Conclusion –South West LLEN

- Email: reception@swllen.net.au
- Consider becoming a member of SWLLEN and keep in contact
- Website: www.swllen.net.au
- Keep the ideas for action rolling.
- Centrelink can also take queries.

**TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the Rudd Government's changes to the workforce participation criteria for establishing independence under Youth Allowance by removing the following two eligibility criteria: that the recipient worked part-time for 15+ hours per week for two years or more since leaving school; and the recipient earned, in an 18-month period since leaving school, an amount equivalent to 75% of the maximum rate of pay (in 2009 this requires earnings of \$19,532). The effect of this change is that eligibility criteria for the Independent Youth Allowance will retrospectively require participants to complete 30 hours work per week over an 18/24 month period compared to earning \$19,532 over 18 months.

This means a student who has complied with the previous rules but not worked 30 hours per week will have lost the credit for their effort and must start again thus losing two years before commencing a university course. In the current economic climate, there is a shortage of job prospects for young job seekers. This will make it even more difficult for students to achieve the 30 hour per week minimum requirement.

This proposal further disadvantages young people whose place of residence is beyond daily commuting distance from a university and thus must fund their total accommodation costs over and above the other direct costs of such an education. Trying to gain independent status by working 30 hours per week while attending university is an unfair expectation of students and virtually unachievable.

We therefore ask the House to change the criteria so that rural and regional students are not disadvantaged.

PRINCIPAL PETITIONER

Name: Carolyn Jennings

Signature: _____

Address: 174B Timor Street, Warrnambool, Victoria, 3280

Email: orgadvan@bigpond.net.au

Telephone: 5561 0047

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For many young people in rural and regional areas this means the loss of any opportunity to leave home and study at university. Some will simply choose to not attend as the Independent Youth Allowance represented the only means of support they had to live away from home to study.

The changes further increase regional disadvantage and exacerbate the existing problems for those who are required to travel in order to have access to their chosen course at university. Costs to families of students who leave home are estimated to be a minimum of \$20,000 above those of students who can remain home for their course of study.

We therefore ask the House to change the criteria so that rural and regional students are not disadvantaged. We request that all young people who have to live away from home to study the course of their choice are supported through an equivalence of the Independent Youth Allowance which recognises the inequity for rural and regional students and families.

PRINCIPAL PETITIONER

Name Carolyn Jennings Signature: _____

Address: 174B Timor Street, Warrnambool, Victoria, 3280

Email: orgadvan@bigpond.net.au Telephone: 5561 0047

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**We call on the Federal Government to:
 Reconsider the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance announced in
 the Federal Budget and
 Provide longer-term recognition of regional disadvantage suffered by rural and
 regional people who are forced to leave home to access further education**

#	Response Date	I endorse the resolution and offer further comment
1	Jun 5, 2009 3:38 AM	<p>It is essential that country students be no longer disadvantaged as they were under the Howard Government. Unfortunately current Government has elements of policy working against itself. A fair go for rural working families is a moral requirement for the young people of our country.</p>
2	Jun 5, 2009 3:40 AM	<p>Why punish students who live in regional and remote areas, rather than change the guidelines to address the phenomenon of wealthier, inner-urban students who still live at home receiving the Youth Allowance?</p>
3	Jun 5, 2009 4:01 AM	<p>As a rural principal in a secondary school, I live every day with the anxiety regional disadvantage brings to our families. As a mother of three students at university, I struggle every month to pay for their living costs. I was a rural student lucky enough to get a studentship and was therefore enabled to study</p>
4	Jun 5, 2009 4:41 AM	<p>Having more than a 15 month time frame for gaining independent status for the purpose of gaining Youth Allowance eligibility is a major hardship for rural young people</p>
5	Jun 5, 2009 5:53 AM	<p>My son was one of four secondary students selected to enrol in the Victorian College of the Arts in Sculpture. It was an excellent opportunity for him to persue his artistic talent, especially given that the head of Sculpture in the VCA (the most highly recognised Art College in the country) acknowledged that he had a "real future in sculpture in Australia". However, given our financial circumstances, and the fact that he was living in South West Victoria, means that he may have to give up this opportunity because we cannot afford for him to continue on with his education. Young people from the country wishing to further their education, are discriminated against by the current system, however the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance make any university education impossible for country people. Whilst other city students may easily live at home to persue their careers, students from the country have to pay for additional transport and accomodation costs. Whilst our son is currently living independently he cannot claim any benefits and has had to work huge considerable hours on top of his university course to try and live. We were hopeful, however that this could be recitifed when he gained "independant status" and therefore could get some payment from the government. Given the changes proposed to the Independent Youth Allowance and the time demands of his university program he will be unable</p>

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6	Jun 5, 2009 6:31 AM	<p>to work the hours required to gain independent status for payment. It is disappointing that the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance discriminate against rural Australians. It is disappointing that the government aim for upskilling Australians only refers to urban Australians!</p> <p>Rural students are at a distinct disadvantage when attending university in Melbourne or even other rural communities other than their own. They face emotional stress through leaving their family home and significant cost pressures just to attend university that are not incurred by students who are able to continue to reside near to their university of choice. Our son commenced university in Melbourne this year. His accommodation in Melbourne costs \$310 per week plus electricity, water, telephone and internet connection which add approximately \$30 per week in cost. He also incurs \$50 per week in food and incidentals and chooses to walk half an hour each way each day to university to save on public transport fares. His rented accommodation is in a student residence run by the YMCA - we chose this location as it provided a safe environment for a country student. Under terms of the rental he is required to rent the property for a full 52 week period. His annual cost of living in Melbourne is over \$18,000 plus the cost of books, fees and infrequent return travel to rural Victoria. this cost is excessive and only affordable as both my wife and I work. he does not receive youth allowance and will more than likely never qualify for the youth allowance. It is extremely unfortunate that students, particularly from rural areas are not better cared for when they move to the big city and are required to pay excessive costs of living over and above that paid by other students who are able to study close to their place of residence. We are chronically short of good tertiary qualified professionals in rural Victoria, we should be assisting rural students to study at university and return to their rural homes to bring skills to these areas. Instead we discourage these kids by imposing huge costs on them and then taking any opportunity to reduce the youth allowance which helps support their lives during study. The measures proposed in regard to youth allowance should be making it easier not harder for students to study. I compare this to my eldest son who started studying here then migrated to England to work. He has resided and worked there for three years. He has now been accepted in to a UK</p>

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7	Jun 5, 2009 7:03 AM	<p>university to complete his studies and is receiving funding support in the UK to encourage him to study rather than to discourage him. The English system clearly recognizes the need to improve the educational standards of its younger generation and is looking to assist them. The Australian system seems to be discouraging our young adults, particularly those who are disadvantaged as rural students, from furthering their education, which in th long run will benefit the community as a whole. Why is this Government holding back the education of Regional Youth. You would think we had Jeff Kennet in Canberra</p>
8	Jun 5, 2009 7:46 AM	<p>The cost of providing accommodation for a student who has to move away from home for tertiary education is not reflected in the youth allowance payment. As a parent who sent 4 children to university I can assure you this puts a serious strain on the family budget. The very student who has the motivation, commitment and willingness to work for a gap year, so that they can afford to achieve further education is the type of person who, when qualified will contribute to both the financial and social capital of our nation. It is imperative that those who have enough initiative and commitment to use the gap year as a means of furthering their education be allowed to do so.</p>
9	Jun 5, 2009 8:02 AM	<p>We need real action to help rural students to overcome the enormous extra financial cost involved in having to live away from home to attend tertiary education.</p>
10	Jun 5, 2009 8:22 AM	<p>I am very disappointed in the decision to change access to Youth Allowance. We have a child in Year 12 who is planning to go to university - something we've assumed would be accessible and achievable for her and us - and now it's not feeling that way. I'm disappointed because I have been a strong Labour supporter, and have never felt disadvantaged through Labour policy until now. Now, because my daughter lives in regional Victoria, she runs the risk of not achieving the education she needs to get into the field of work she's interested in. I've always felt that having 12 months off between finishing year 12 and going to university is a good thing - but I think that a longer gap risks losing a university place and/or interest in going.</p>
11	Jun 5, 2009 10:49 AM	<p>Equal opportunity should be available to all within supportive networks</p>
12	Jun 5, 2009 8:43 PM	<p>This is an important issue for people in regional Australia. If you look at the Statistics, young people are</p>

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13	Jun 5, 2009 9:44 PM	<p>increasingly deferring their entry into tertiary education to afford what often is a move to another location that incurs expenses that are beyond what their parents or carers can afford. It also plays an important role in allowing young people to mature for another year and enable them to gain some valuable work and life experience, while at the same time not keeping them away from education for such a time that they will possibly defer their decision indefinitely</p> <p>We must be able to do better than this to assist our rural kids get a better education. We need visionary policy makers not heads in the sand. Deferment levels are already way to high, is this going to help? I don't think so!</p>
14	Jun 6, 2009 12:48 AM	<p>Without Youth Allowance my daughter who was fortunate to get into Melbourne University would not have been able to go as the cost of accomodation is so prohibitive. She completes her Arts Degree this year and is applying to do the JD next year. She will not be able to further her studies if Youth Allowance changes are enacted.</p>
15	Jun 6, 2009 10:52 AM	<p>If you want to look at people misusing the system put a "distance away from uni" clause in the criteria. Any student that has to live away from home has to be independent - even if they have to rely on their parents support for accomodation or food. The current independent allowance does not cover everything but it gives the country students a chance to aspire to go to Uni.</p>
16	Jun 7, 2009 12:23 AM	<p>For many rural youth they have to leave the family home to access employment or education. In reality they are living as independant adults and therefore should be recognised as independant.</p>
17	Jun 8, 2009 4:44 AM	<p>I believe the problem of less needy people taking advantage of this situation should be addressed directly rather than causing a problem for those who legitimately deserve help.</p>
18	Jun 8, 2009 8:47 AM	<p>We must support young people particualrly in regional areas to access the educational opportunities they deserve.</p>
19	Jun 8, 2009 11:01 PM	<p>The proposed system seriously disadvantages those coming from rural areas. Students from rural areas are already disadvantaged compared to their city counterparts, lets not make the divide even greater.</p>
20	Jun 8, 2009 11:44 PM	<p>It would be reasonable to make special allowances for families living in the country where tertuary education, is of necessity limited and many student sneed to leave home to access the courses they wish to study. Whilst the</p>

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21Jun 9, 2009 12:40 AM		<p>increase of relocation and other costs for students receiveing youth allowance is of benefit this does not take into accoutn the many families, on slightly higher incomes, who struggle to afford the cost of sending their chidlren to the city to study. Also changing the work condition for independence without notice and thus not allowing families and their chidlren to plan for their future is unfair.</p> <p>The government needs to recognise that there are limited higher education options for young people in regional/rural areas and that the cost of living in Melbourne to study their preferred course makes it prohibitive for most young people. The option of delaying tertiary study for more than 18 months to save funds to cover living costs disadvantages country people; the alternative of trying to study and work 30 hours per week is counter productive to effective learning (assuming young people can obtain work in the current labour market). Financial support for regional/rural students to contribute to a higher skilled country is necessary for Australia's future.</p>
22Jun 9, 2009 12:49 AM		<p>I am a doctor of Osteopathy and I have just returned to Shepparton, my home town to practice. With the current changes, I would have been forced to take two years from study to work, which would mean I would still be studying now and not providing health care to country people.</p>
23Jun 9, 2009 2:02 AM		<p>As principal of a Catholic Regional College, I am disturbed that the proposed changes will have dire consequences for many of our students seeking a place in tertiary education. The Ballarat Diocesan principal's group will be making a submission to the Governemnet on reconsidering this change.</p>
24Jun 9, 2009 2:09 AM		<p>As a secondary school careers practitioner in a regional area, the proposed changes to Youth Allowance are quite disturbing for our young people. The ability to qualify for and receive Y/A has been the hinging point, enabling many of our students to pursue tertiary studies. With the closest universities being 70 and 100km away, students must relocate and have no choice but to pay accommodation and living away from home expenses. The closest TAFE is 80 and 100km away and again students and families are not encouraged to pursue further education options because of the cost of relocating. Because of the changes to Y/A and the costs faced by our regional students, I can foresee a number of our young</p>

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		people opting out of university completely. On the one hand earlier this year, Julia Gillard spoke of the Governments desire for an increase in the percentage of people with a degree and now on the other hand we see a proposal that will effectively remove the vehicle which enables regional people to achieve this. Could the government could look at a further tier of income testing or assistance which supports regional families and students in the pursuit of further education. Many families in this area whose students go on to further studies do not receive Centrelink benefits but nor are they high income families. The pursuit of further education and skills for their children comes at a high cost. I urge the government not to further exacerbate the city/country divide.
25Jun 9, 2009 2:17 AM		We have just sent our 5th child off to University and the cost has been enormous. City Students don't pay rent, have their meals cooked,their house is clesn and their washing done. All they have to do is study.They have none of these worries let alone where their next dollar foe a feed will come from. We had 1 daughter who lived on cabbage and onions for a week because she knew how hard it was on the farm with the drought and didn't want to ask for money. She had spent what we gave her on a text book. COUNTR KIDS ARE SO DISADVANTAGED UNDER THE CURRENT SYSTEM. PLEASE DON'T MAKE IT ANY WORSE. I want all rural children to have equal chances at further education & to develop the skill base of our country to support our whole population economically & socially. I cannot see that I will be able to financially support my 3 children through university even though I work 6 days a week. Education is a right & this proposed change to the Independent Youth Allowance is making it almost impossible for my children to exercise this right. Our country needs skilled workers - and our rural areas are particularly disadvantaged - If anything I urge you to make it easier for rural people to access higher education - and then return to the country once qualified.
26Jun 9, 2009 2:23 AM		rural students such as those in my remote community battle lack of resources throughout their schooling. these changes will exclude many of them from a chance at higher education as they must support themselves away from home if they wish to study. making the move is part of the problem. how to finance it now makes study prohibitive for them
27Jun 9, 2009 2:49 AM		

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28	Jun 9, 2009 3:02 AM	<p>It is already hard for students in many rural areas to work to gain any benefit for living away from home and attending university/TAFE colleges, this is unfair.</p>
29	Jun 9, 2009 3:41 AM	<p>As a leading teacher in charge of VCE/VCAL students in a country city (secondary school) I can testify to the fact that the resolution will further disadvantage non metropolitan students. Country students at the present time are rejecting tertiary studies in Melb. and Geelong due to the high cost and natural disadvantages they have to overcome.</p>
30	Jun 9, 2009 4:19 AM	<p>It is totally unfair to change the rules for Independent Youth Allowance in the middle of the game for the 2008 cohort of year 12 students. They should be 'grandfathered' like the current Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship recipients. Why not delay implementation of the changes until January 2011? This is when changes to student income are to be implemented. To allow fair access to higher education for rural and regional students, the parental income thresholds need to be lifted to acknowledge that it costs at least \$20,000 to support a student living away from home to study. To allow for tax, parents must earn a minimum of \$30,000 to net \$20,000 to provide that support. This is a big ask for middle income earners. The criteria for independent youth allowance should include both distance from the education and training provider (suggest over 60 kms) and adjusted parental income. This is necessary to prevent the quoted 'misuse' of the system with 49% of students living at home receiving the independent youth allowance (what about the other 51%?) and ensure that high earners in the country pay for their children's further education.</p>
31	Jun 9, 2009 5:29 AM	<p>In early 2009 I made my decision to defer and work for 12months to be able to qualify for Youth Allowance the next year when I take up my position at Monash University. I am now informed that this information is no longer valid, thus my dream to pursue my study further is made much more difficult!!!!</p>
32	Jun 9, 2009 6:06 AM	<p>My daughter achieved 97.5 and chose the gap year to earn some money to assist with the cost of university. She has been severely let down by the changes and this has forced her to reconsider her options The changes should be brought in more gradually so the families can adjust well in advance.</p>
33	Jun 9, 2009 6:07 AM	<p>lets please put the future of our rural and regional students Tertiary education top of the agenda and support</p>

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34	Jun 9, 2009 12:02 PM	<p>their dream to gain an education and come back to the country to live and work!</p> <p>Rural kids certainly have more issues to deal with when choosing further education. They generally have to leave home, find new accommodation, cannot keep their part-time jobs, travel etc etc. To further penalise them is just not fair.</p>
35	Jun 9, 2009 1:12 PM	<p>Differences in circumstantial socio-economic status and social and environmental factors affect individual school completers from a non-metropolitan family environment differently to school completers from city-based families. The relocation necessary for regional students to attend university is riddled with prohibitive expenses, with expenses associated with housing being a key factor. Initially regional students need to establish a framework to arrange and share housing, whereas their city-based counterparts can often continue their previous accommodation arrangements. .. Regional (or nonmetropolitan) school completers are much more likely than their city counterparts to defer an offer of a place at university. Research suggests that this is due to a combination of factors relating to isolation and financial hardship.</p>
36	Jun 9, 2009 10:01 PM	<p>Without recieveing the independence myself and two oher sibling would not have been able to attend university at all. We are currently qualified as a Structural Engineer, Electrical Engineer and an P.E Teacher all who work in regional areas.</p>
37	Jun 9, 2009 10:46 PM	<p>the changes should be that the payments made by the overseas students of aprox \$250'000 per student to the university, should pay for this youth allowance. And not selling out australians education places.</p>
38	Jun 10, 2009 12:12 AM	<p>Rural students have no choice but to leave home to access tertiary education. the cost of living away from home is an enormous expense for a large amount of families and adds extra stress to the student.</p>
39	Jun 10, 2009 5:49 AM	<p>The enormous cost of education, relocation, lack of support must be acknowledged for rural students. The difficulty of finding, let alone affording to rent needs to be addressed. We have students who have been consistently forced to sleep on the floor in places rented by older students. The advantages to urban and suburban students is enormous and completely unfair. A simple trip home to see family is also more costly for rural students.</p>
40	Jun 10, 2009 5:52 AM	<p>Rural and regional families have had enough of the disadvantages involved with living where we live. I</p>

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41	Jun 10, 2009 7:03 AM	<p>applaud this network for taking a stand on such a grossly unfair, unjust change to a system that , in this economic climate, needs to be revised to encourage our rural teens to gain relevant skills to help sustain their communities. Absolutely NO thought has been put into the long term effects of these changes... it is a situation which I liken to the scrapping of Technical schools some 20 odd years ago! This proposition should never have been brought in, let alone brought in to directly affect the students who have taken a gap year this year to try and gain some sort of financial independence. These students had made plans based on Govt policy at the time, and it is VERY disappointing that these students AND their hardworking, families will be directly affected. Kerri Colliver, Heywood, Victoria</p> <p>At least consider those students who live rurally and have chosen to defer their University placement in 2009 in loo of working hard over 12 months to try to earn the \$19,500 in order to be deemed independent. They have worked hard to obtain a VCE score in 2008 to gain access to a University and course that requires them to relocate thus not only will they be required to pay university fees but for board and accomodation and living expenses. I thought Australia was about equality and having a fair go!!! Or do you want everyone to relocate to the city!!! Then we will just import all of our food!!!</p> <p>AS WELL AS DISADVANTAGING COUNTRY STUDENTS WHO UNLIKE THEIR CITY COUNTERPARTS DO NOT HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING ABLE TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY WHILE STILL LIVING AT HOME;THERE HAS BEEN NO CONSIDERATION FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE MADE THEIR</p>
42	Jun 10, 2009 9:30 AM	<p>COMMITMENTS UNDER THE CURRENT ELIGIBILITY. EVERY TIME THER IS A BUDGET ARE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW TWELVE MONTHS IN ADVANCE WHAT CHANGES ARE GOING TO BE MADE.???? ARE UNIVERSITIES NOW GOING TO ALLOW DEFERRALS FOR TWO YEARS TO ACCOMODATE THE PEOPLE AFFECTED THIS YEAR OR FOR LATER YEARS INTAKES.???</p>
43	Jun 10, 2009 9:37 PM	<p>Students who have defered their courses in 2009 on the understanding they could access Youth allowance in 2010 if they met the criteria of earning the \$19,500 should not be disadvantaged by any changes. They should still be considered under the current rules. As courses can only</p>

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44	Jun 10, 2009 11:24 PM	<p>be deferred for 12 months many students will be severely disadvantaged. In particular students from rural areas who already face regional disadvantage will endure further social and economic inequity.</p> <p>I have taken a gap year in order to qualify for youth allowance, to lessen the financial burden of going to university. Now with these proposed changes to Youth Allowance my plans have been completely upturned. Life at uni will be much more difficult..</p>
45	Jun 10, 2009 11:28 PM	<p>I would go as far as saying that the proposed changes are discriminatory against rural students. I can only conclude that the government did not do their homework well enough, or at all.</p>
46	Jun 10, 2009 11:31 PM	<p>the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance adversely affect the opportunities of regional and rural based students. These students must move to be able to participate in higher education. I have often listened to politicians speak on trying to fill the shortage of skilled people in these areas and yet these students are being discouraged from reaching their potential and bring new skills back to their home locations.</p>
47	Jun 11, 2009 12:12 AM	<p>I have been assisting students in a regional remote college at Lavers Hill P-12 College in the Otways for the past 20 years. Rural disadvantage has been a major cause for students not being able to consider university in our area as in the past students have tended to come off farms- the value of farms, irregardless of income earned, have excluded most students from being eligible for Youth Allowance. As all of our students have to leave home if they are going to study at a TAFE or University, Youth Allowance has provided an essential means of support. Through our Managed Individual Pathways Plan (MIPS) we have worked intensively to break the culture of not attending further education- and we see that the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance is only going to take us back to our previous experience where students did not take further study options.</p>
48	Jun 11, 2009 3:57 AM	<p>I am a mother of a 19 year old who has taken a gap year to earn some money and go off to uni next year. This travesty has put those plans at risk, if the changes must come into force at least allow those that are affected for this current year be exempt.</p>
49	Jun 12, 2009 3:42 AM	<p>By enabling our young people to pursue tertiary education we make it possible for some of these professionals to return to rural areas in the future. Country kids are more likely to return to the country and</p>

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50	Jun 12, 2009 6:29 AM	we need professionals desperately. We know rural people are more likely to return to rural areas to work therefore if our students are unable to gain professional qualifications we will have less access to professionals in rural areas. Rural people will be increasingly disadvantaged and discriminated against.
51	Jun 12, 2009 8:02 AM	Very unfair to those students who chose to work for Gap year . How can this change half way through the year. COUNTRY STUDENTS GET A RAW DEAL AGAIN Students can not defer their university place for more than 12mths so if they can find a job during the recession how are they continue to work 30hours for 18mths to 2
52	Jun 14, 2009 10:03 AM	years and go to university,or lose their place at university,when unemployments rising aren't we better to encourage the youth of australia to be at university.Most work hard for 12 mths to reach the target income often working 2 jobs in low income jobs.
53	Jun 14, 2009 10:09 AM	Rural disadvantage needs to be addressed separately from Independent youth Incredibly difficult times over a number of years with drought and water issues has seen rural communities severely disadvantaged, we now have another issue to add to that, with the latest intentions of the Federal Government to make considerable change to the Independent Youth Allowance, data shows us that young rural people are already disadvantaged in attending University, these changes will enhance that disadvantage. My children are of aboriginal descent and these proposed changes disadvantage their access to higher education via economic and locational means. it also is contrary to the closing the gap strategies that the Governemnt has endorsed to encourage access to higher education for Aboriginal students many of whom live in rural and remote communities. As a single parent who is gainfully employed I do not meet the thresholds for my children to receive youth allowance, I am not rich I am a person eho teaches them tho work for what they want in life. These proposed changes mean that a higher education is out of reach for them regardless how well they do at school, I can afford to support my children financlially to living away and their education costs.
54	Jun 14, 2009 10:55 PM	I feel there are all ready enough difficulties for young people from regional areas who need to leave home to study. These proposed changes to Independent Youth Allowance will greatly effect my three daughters. I simply cannot afford to pay their accomodation and other
55	Jun 16, 2009 1:25 AM	
56	Jun 17, 2009 3:08 AM	

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57	Jun 21, 2009 8:34 AM	expenses incurred with study and living away from home, thus they will have to work to gain independence. In a town like Colac there is very little scope for young people to gain full time employment or, at least 30 hours work per week for eighteen months. They are, however able to work seasonally, which has in the past been adequate. Please do not allow these changes to go through - they are simply too discriminatory for regional people. Country families are struggling to send their children to University now. These changes will dramatically decrease my childrens chances of ever going to University. Rural families also have a much greater cost to bear. Our children cannot live at home and attend University. This will disadvantage many families.
58	Jun 26, 2009 4:07 AM	I am the mother of 5 children that may be heading off to university within 4 years of each other. We live in the country a 4 hour drive from Melbourne. HECS for our kids ensures them of reaching their goals.
59	Jun 30, 2009 11:49 PM	my worry is for the school leavers of 2008 that have chosen to work for this year and the effect it will have on them.