

Response to proposed changes to Independent Youth Allowance

The Government's plan to suddenly change the criteria for independent Youth Allowance eligibility is sneaky, mean and unfair. Hundreds of country kids currently taking a gap year in order to start University in the capital cities in 2010 will be totally sunk by this mid stream change of the rules.

Even the previous system was rather devious the way it required kids to earn money 18 months of earning given that their Uni courses typically started around 15 months after having finished school. Hence their first three months away from home was always without Youth allowance support anyway.

But this new criterion that they must work 30 hours per week for at least 18 months before becoming eligible is even more draconian. Think about it! How and when will such country kids ever qualify as independent? Even those who started working the day after their last Year 12 exam in 2008, and continue to work fulltime without a break right up until Uni starts in Feb 2010, will have achieved (only!) 15 months. (And that means "literally" without a break i.e. no time off over Xmas, no time sick, no time between jobs or looking for work, and certainly no holiday.

But even then - how can they possibly to achieve the extra 3 months of 30 hours plus per week work once their full time courses are underway? Even fulltime work during semester breaks is unlikely to be sufficient and it may well take until after their first University year to get there. And all this assumes they the work is always there when they need it. Talk about "Catch 22"!

In other words – this move will be a complete disaster for those thousands of kids who are currently on a "gap" year.

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