

Member of Parliament, My name is Liana Van de Veerdonk and I'm a 19 year old from Mt Gambier, South Australia who started there gap year in 2009 year and who is looking forward to University next year. I worked so unbelievably hard last year in year 12. I managed to work, play sport and still get a TER of 97 as well as 2 perfect scores. This achievement is something I am extremely proud of and that I know I earned by working hard. I come from a family that is in the middle income bracket because my parents are smart with their money and have worked extremely hard all their lives. However, I have a brother in year 12 at the moment and a sister in year 11. My parents are going to have to put all of us through Uni consecutively. Now Uni courses are quite expensive but they are absolutely NOTHING to the cost of living away from home! Country students are so disadvantaged, in this regard. It's already a struggle for us to pay rent, course fees as well as move away from our friends and families. But now you want to take away our youth allowance? The only reason I took a gap year is so I can claim much needed government support! I have spent a year working 60 hour weeks at a winery, picking up hours as a clerk and a swim instructor, even babysitting - and now you want to tell me that it's all for nothing? You want to tell me I've wasted a year of my life working to gain much needed support that I now cannot get just because my parents work hard? Well I just won't accept that. I am a hard working and valuable citizen and you're taking away benefits I deserve. I've planned my life around this; it's not fair to change the law now. You need to support country students, not penalize them. If these changes in the Youth Allowance laws are passed, you're killing my dreams and the dreams of many other rural students! Please consider this when you make this inquiry. What would you do in my situation? What would you do if you now could not afford to go to Uni because these reforms take away the support you need and the support you have worked hard to prove that you deserve it? I want you to know that I agree with the National Union of Students in their recommendation that if the government goes ahead with this measure that the grandfathering should be extended so this year's gap students who have arranged their life in good faith based on the policies in place until this budget announcement. An appropriate date, if at all would be the 1st of January 2011. It's just not fair to change a law retrospectively. Remember this- We are the future of this nation, so don't stunt our growth! We will all be voters (like I already am) so don't abuse our trust. And more than anything remember this - we won't give in without a fight, we won't back down. Thanks for your time and please just stop and think for a moment. Try putting yourself in our shoes. Liana Van de Veerdonk09 Gap StudentSA