

I would like to make a submission not to remove the criteria that enable students to work part time for up to 18 months in order to gain Youth Allowance at the independent rate.

The new requirement that students work 2 years at 30 hours a week will be almost impossible to achieve in the view that employment opportunities in rural and regional Australia are reduced compared to our city counterparts and the very few Traineeships that are available are only for 12 months which will fall short of the required 2 years. Our students are disadvantaged because of the fewer employment opportunities and also not being able to apply for traineeships because of the inadequate time frame. Even if our students did in fact work the 30 hours a week for two years after working extremely hard to gain the required TER ranking and subsequent acceptance into University the University will not allow a student to defer for 2 years. These students will then have to re-compete for the course with new graduates. The fact that being out of study alone for two years these students will inevitably mean that many just don't go on.

Already my daughter has been faced with ongoing disadvantage by attending a low socio-economic school, unreliable internet connections, drought and distance. We have had to buy a car for our daughter to travel to and from school because we live 4.6 kilometres from school which does not qualify for the school bus and to add to the disadvantage we live too far out of town to catch the town bus to school. It is too far to walk with a 10+ kilo school bag and a saxophone to carry each day on a very busy, fast rural road.

She has Dyslexia and has worked extremely hard for many years in preparation for year 12, while working a part time job to help fund her dream. She was then planning on a gap year as a trainee to gain Youth Allowance as an Independent and then to study at The University of Adelaide. If she was to attend University it would be a two hour trip each way, which is 4 hours a day on top of full time study. Already rural students suffer cultural and family displacement in travelling hundreds of kilometres to attend uni and removing a source of financial support is a major disincentive.

Our only option is for her to relocate to the city. To keep her in Adelaide in university the cost is estimated to be \$15,000 to \$18,000 per year, we are just not able to afford to send her to University and she will more than likely not achieve her dream at all if she is denied Youth Allowance. For my daughter to attend University it is totally dependent on gaining Independent Youth Allowance. We are only able to partially support her even though I have changed to full time employment to assist in the cost because we are already helping to support her older sister who is achieving her dream at uni. She has qualified and is receiving Independent Youth Allowance, which is an enormous help but is still a struggle and she is also required to work part time to support herself.

If my year 12 daughter does not qualify for Independent Youth Allowance she will suffer more disadvantages in that she will not be able to apply for a relocation / accommodation scholarship, or in fact any of the financial scholarships. Because of her Dyslexia she will also not qualify for academic scholarships. Unlike her city counterparts who can continue to live at home with no interruption to normal every

day living, they will not have to set up a double household paying for two lots of rent, utilities, food, vehicles, fuel, family separation, phone and the list continues.

Rural communities are already struggling to entice professionals to our areas. If this is passed our communities will suffer with fewer professional graduates from amongst our communities.

In conclusion I submit that if these changes must be introduced then rural and regional students who must leave home or travel unrealistic time frames in order to attend university should automatically be considered independent and qualify for youth allowance in their own right.

Anita J McDonald