

**Subject:** Inquiry into Country students and Youth Allowance

Good afternoon, I am writing to express my utter dismay at the changes that are proposed for the Youth Allowance for Tertiary students. Aside from the fact that it is manifestly unfair to change the rules for the 2008 School Leavers, who have made their plans to defer university for a year so they could afford to go at the start of 2010, this is just so unjust for all country kids, and makes a mockery of the Federal Government's expressed desire to upskill our youth.

If country school leavers are forced to work for 2 years before they go to university, they just won't go. They will get jobs and will find it very difficult to go back to studying and having a low income after 2 years. So the very people who would be most likely to come back to the country towns after they finish uni will not be getting tertiary degrees.

This is such a bad, bad policy. If the system was being rorted by city students, the cure has been far worse than the rort.

I have 3 sons. My eldest finished school last year and deferred Civil Engineering at Wollongong University for a year so he could work and get some cash behind him for uni in 2010. But now the goal post has been moved and he is left in limbo. We live 600 km from Wollongong, so he will certainly be living away from home. Without Youth Allowance I don't know if we will be able to afford for him to start uni. We have a business in Griffith and our income would not meet the new criteria, though we are certainly not well off as we enter our 9th year of drought. This policy will obviously impact on the tertiary opportunities available for my two younger boys as well. Our closest university is at Wagga Wagga but that is still 200 km away. They will have to live away from home to access university education.

I am really angry that there appears to have been no thought given to the ramifications of this new policy for the country. Country students are being denied access to Tertiary education and country towns are being denied a skilled workforce. I hope the Senate sees the utter foolishness of these changes and takes appropriate action.

Yours faithfully,  
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