

Unfortunately, since the Government's announcement in regards to the Youth Allowance, much of the focus has been on the hardships which will now be faced by rural and regional students. However, city students who are wishing to attend rural and regional universities are now facing the same issues as their rural and regional counterparts. I finished Year 12 last year, and it has been my intention since July last year to leave Sydney to study a journalism and sports studies double degree at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst. Since that point, all my planning has revolved around establishing a life in Bathurst. I have taken a gap year, during which I have worked in order to save money. This meant that when I went to university at CSU, I would be considered as an independent when it comes to youth allowance calculations. My year of work in 2009 would effectively ensure that I would be able to fully concentrate my efforts on university in 2010 and beyond.

Sadly, the Government has now shown that the old adage about the best laid plans coming unstuck is true. Despite the planning that my family and I have taken to ensure that I can study in Bathurst, the Government has erased that certainty with one fell swoop.

My mother and stepfather hardly have the money to cover all their expenses, let alone helping me to establish a separate life. It is fine while I am living under their roof, but living in a separate house with my own expenses is a different kettle of fish.

I am not afraid of work, and will actively try to find work. But this isn't Sydney, I am moving to a regional city where, it must be said, jobs are thin on the ground (especially in the current economic climate). And even if I were to get a job, university would take up the majority of my time and I would not have the time to work the required hours to cover my living expenses.

At the moment, I am in a conundrum. If I am not eligible to receive Youth Allowance, then I will struggle to be able to afford study at Bathurst, and I will have to look at a Sydney university. Although I am only one student, I am sure there are many students who are facing the same issues. And I am sure that if students are faced with these financial issues, there will be an increasing number of students who will instantly dismiss studying at our regional universities.

I strongly urge the committee to consider the effect of the Youth Allowance changes on any student who has to live away from home to study their chosen course.

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