

Submission 6/8/09.

I am opposed to any changes to student assistance as proposed changes announced in the federal budget 2009.

Background. I live in the town of Narrandera in rural NSW. My wife and myself work fulltime, have a mortgage and support our Three children in various ways.

I have a son currently having a year off tertiary education ,commonly known as a “Gap year”, to gain employment and earn the required amount of money to be entitled for Youth allowance so he can help support himself and finish his university education.

My son has to attend his university which is 100 km from our home so commuting and studying would be unpractical, expensive and place him at a disadvantage to achieve his very best in his studies.

My sons first year of his tertiary education was funded by my wife and myself. We did this as there was not any assistance available for my son or ourselves. We had to support him with money for books, accommodation, food, vehicle expenses and with very little left, a bit extra for a social life. This has made it extremely difficult and hard for my wife and I as what surplus money we did have have been used to support my son.

We have supported our son with his gap year as employment in rural areas is extremely hard to gain and always very limited with what hours can be secured. With the proposed changes to hours worked over an extended period of time I know that this would be extremely difficult ,practically impossible to qualify to be deemed independent and be entitled for assistance. My son has been left very disillusioned with the proposed changes, his dream of a profession harder to achieve. From my wife’s and my perspective we are left wondering how to support our son and wonder how we can prepare our daughter for tertiary education if she chooses that path.

If we are to keep our rural areas functioning we must support our kids in education and make opportunity for them in rural areas. It is difficult enough to live in the country, higher living cost-limited employment prospects- poor health outcomes etc , the proposed changes are another inequity cast onto rural Australians.

I know from discussion with other parents sharing the same circumstances as we do the feeling is the same. It’s bad enough that our own opportunities as parents becomes harder to sustain but it is despairing that what support there is for our kids looks like being made harder as well.

Thankyou Peter Draper. 6/8/09.