

**To:** The Standing Committee for Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport.

**RE:** Rural and Regional access to secondary and tertiary Education Opportunities.

I write this submission to the senate committee, in an earnest appeal to withhold or at least amend the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance eligibility criteria.

The changes shall adversely affect me, as I am both a rural secondary student, and a potential candidate for completing tertiary education at an Australian University within the next two years. I currently live and work on the family dairy farm in addition to completing my NSW Higher School Certificate. For me to persue tertiary education in my intended area of study, law; I must travel a minimum of 4 – 5 hours. This would come at great cost to my family and myself. I have made the decision not continue farming as my family has done so for generations, and am resigned to the fact I shall not milk a herd of cows for remainder of my life. Instead I wish to persue a career that shall better place me, in responding to the needs of australain citizens in the country.

Over the past several years, the farms profitability has been beleaguered by the affliction of drought. Our source of income has been reduced significantly; my mother has thus sought employment elsewhere and uses this income to support my father and two other younger siblings. My mother's income would place the family above the threshold. This income, is stretched a large distance, essentially supporting the whole family. It would be a huge burden on the family if my attendance at university goes ahead, without the level of assistance to which I can obtain under the current conditions.

I do not intend to put this burden on my family; it would be a selfish thing indeed.

Next year I plan to take a twelve month deferment of my course at university, and if the changes are unsuccessful, try and earn enough money to gain the full independent youth allowance. If the current criteria, are neutered as the government proposes, then I see that my tertiary education is placed in jeopardy. It is highly unlikely that I shall be able to work the minimum 30 hours a week for 18 months as work is simply not that abundant, and in that quantity. Neither do I plan to resort to wedded matrimony or the fathering of children to meet the independence criteria, although I was momentarily tempted.

As it stands, I have organized employment with a school in London and shall seek to try and meet the 30 hours eligibility test. With an eternal hope and a trust in the democratic, political system of this country, I believe that these proposed changes shall at the most be changed to better accommodate the rural and regional youth of this country and the very least amended.

If rural and regional youth are to be granted the equality, afforded to their metropolitan peers, then I believe strongly, that you must alter the changes as they currently stand. As you wade through the mountainous piles of submissions you will have undoubtedly received, I hope you gain an appreciation that youth from rural and regional Australia will not simply sit on the fence, watch the crops burn and let this iniquity occur.

Yours Sincerely

Daniel J T McKay

*Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2009.*

*'Royden', 1099 Blayney Road, Evans Plains, Bathurst.*