

Submission for the Senate Enquiry into Youth Allowance.

I have lived in rural Australia for all but 6 of my 55 years, being four years at Adelaide University, followed by two years employment in the city. I have a 19 year old son, who took a gap year in 2008 and qualified for youth allowance. He is now doing his first year of an Engineering/Commerce degree at the University of WA. I also have a 17 year old daughter who is currently doing her TEE at Manjimup Senior High School. She is planning a gap year next year and the hope was that she too would qualify for youth allowance. However, with the changes to the eligibility for Youth Allowance this now appears unlikely unless she is prepared to take a two year gap between high school and university where she plans to study to become a primary school teacher.

The cost for a student from rural areas to attend university in the city is between \$10,000 and \$15,000 more than the cost for a student living in the metropolitan area. Without the youth allowance subsidy, many young people from Manjimup will not be able to afford to attend the university of their choice in the city. Manjimup is a low socio economic area and the average wage here is well below the national average. If students are to go to University they need assistance from the government as the cost of moving to the city and paying for accommodation would otherwise be prohibitive for both the students and their parents. However, it is grossly unfair that country students need to take a 2 year gap between school and university in order to qualify for youth allowance. This puts rural students 2 years behind their city peers who are able to live at home while undertaking their studies.

Whilst my husband and I earn enough money to support our daughter through university, she would much prefer to be independent and not feel a financial burden to us.

I have lived in rural areas for most of my life. I accept that we pay more for our food, fuel and to build our houses; this is our choice. But I cannot accept that the government will deny young country people the chance of a tertiary education because of a misguided attempt to save some dollars. Please assist our children to have the same opportunity as their city cousins to have the education they desire in a similar time frame.