

Dear Senate Enquiry,

I am writing to you to express my concern about the proposed changes to the eligibility requirements of Youth Allowance. I do not think that the government has fully considered the implications of the eligibility requirement changes on prospective students. Having to work 30 hours a week for 18 months makes it almost impossible for prospective students to earn independence for Youth Allowance and commence their studies. All, but one, Australian universities do not allow students to defer their studies for two years, and it is unreasonable for students to be expected to work 30 hours a week during their first semester of university. The average drop-out rate for first year students is estimated to be as high as 20%, in some degrees it is much higher than this. Rates of drop-out will increase significantly if students are also expected to be working almost full-time in jobs (not to mention the fact that it will be hard for them to find work at the start of their university degree when every other first year student will also be job seeking).

There are also 30,700 students currently in their gap year who worked, confident that they would be eligible to earn independence when they started university next year, who now find that they are not eligible and now cannot afford to go to university next year. Do not think that I am writing about an abstract person, I know such a student and I am outraged that they are having to reconsider their future because the government that I voted for has decided to 'help' students by 'fixing' youth allowance.

Rural families are going to be adversely affected by these changes to a much greater extent, because there is no chance for those students to be living with their parents while attending university. It would appear that the Bradley Review overlooked a significant portion of Australia's working families in an attempt to demonise students who were apparently 'abusing' the system. I am urging you to not allow these eligibility requirement amendments to pass the Senate. Labour came to power through the votes of working families and young people, it would seem foolish to alienate both of these demographics in one broad sweep by making it almost impossible for the next generation of tertiary students to attend university.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Morrison