



# Robert Oakeshott MP

Federal Member for Lyne

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## *Introduction:*

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Rural and remote communities are marginalised when compared to their metropolitan counterparts on a range of social indicators, including health, socio-economic<sup>1</sup> status and perhaps most significantly education<sup>2</sup>.

Receiving an education, being given access to higher education and vocational training opportunities and in turn having the maximum possible control over one's pathway into the labour market is essential to any social inclusion agenda or policy framework.

## *Broader recommendations:*

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The key phrase in the Terms of Reference for this inquiry- and the principle that should underpin any recommendation of the committee- is **equitable access**.

The key to achieving equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education for students in rural and regional Australia, and ensuring that the Government adequately

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<sup>1</sup> ABS, 2006 *Census for Population and Housing* indicates that the unemployment rate is much higher in all age groups in the regional electorate of Lyne than in the rest of the state of NSW.

<sup>2</sup> ABS, 2006 *Census for Population and Housing* indicates that 66 per cent of people aged 20 to 24 have completed year 12 in New South Wales, which is almost 20 percentage points higher than the proportion for the regional electorate of Lyne.

provides for this, lies firstly in recognising that *equity for all* is not achieved through the delivery of *the same for all*. Secondly it requires collaborative thinking and delivery models that reach all community participants on the education journey.

The report *Towards a National Education and Training Strategy for Rural Australians*<sup>3</sup> argued for better mechanisms of coordination over the provision of extra resources.<sup>4</sup> That is to say, that the delivery of education through collaboration of existing mechanisms is more beneficial than a further the roll-out of resources that may be unnecessary or poorly targeted. Secondly, both the *Rural and Isolated School Students and their Higher Education Choices*<sup>5</sup> report and the *Engaging Universities and Regions; Knowledge Contribution to Regional Economic Development in Australia*<sup>6</sup> report have identified that where funding sources and criteria are departmentalised or incompatible with community needs, then government measures to increase equitable access will be limited.

Therefore a more flexible 'whole of government' approach is needed to match funding sources with community needs to achieve the desired goal of **equitable access for all**.

**Recommendation 1: Equitable access will only be achieved by firstly determining the needs of each learning environment in its local context and then providing for those needs in that context.**

**Recommendation 2: Government funding sources should not be restricted by departmental boundaries.**

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<sup>3</sup> National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1991)

<sup>4</sup> Crump S, Teyford K, *Opening Their Eyes: E-Learning for Rural and Isolated Communities in Australi*, (2009) p8

<sup>5</sup> National Board of Employment, Education and Training Higher Education Council (1999)

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (2000)

***Specific response to terms of reference:***

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***An assessment of the adequacy of Government measures to provide equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education opportunities to students from rural and regional communities attending metropolitan institutions, and metropolitan students attending regional universities or technical and further education (TAFE) colleges, with particular reference to:***

- a. the financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE;***

Students and their families from rural and regional areas are often confronted with substantial relocation costs that do not apply to families living in metropolitan areas or areas of close geographical proximity to secondary schools, universities or TAFE institutes.

Rural and regional students who are required to relocate to metropolitan areas to access tertiary study are hit with relocation and basic subsistence costs of approximately \$17,000 - \$20,000 per annum according to university accommodation services information. The cost of relocation to another regional centre is approximately \$14,000-\$17,000 per annum.

This means rural and regional students and their families are immediately disadvantaged on a per child basis wanting to complete their higher education. Students are subsequently having to undertake considerably more paid work (if they can find it) to afford relocation costs alone before even taking into account the costs of courses and student and book fees.

The cost of relocating to these tertiary institutions significantly complicates and frustrates the decision making process for prospective students and their families.

***b. the education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas;***

- Continuing to support distance education services such as improving broadband internet and satellite services.
- Bringing the on-campus experience of tertiary institutions to regional areas. The Hastings, Manning and Macleay Valleys combined (approximate combined population of 150,000) do not have easy access to a stand alone university presence. The closest tertiary institutions are in Newcastle (two to three hours drive south from the Valley's) or Lismore (four to five hours drive north from the Valley's).
- Supporting the efforts of already proven collaborative arrangements that are expanding the opportunities for students to gain entry into higher education and VET institutions. On the Mid-North Coast examples include the Coffs Harbour Education Campus, TAFE/Newcastle University partnership in Port Macquarie and the TAFE/University of Newcastle collaboration in the Hunter Valley.

On the Mid-North Coast these models are seen to be effective by the institutes that are participating in their delivery. As a result our area has formed the Education and Skills Forum which is a coalition of representatives from the Port Macquarie Hastings Council, North Coast TAFE, Newcastle and Southern Cross universities, MNC Regional Development, Port Macquarie Community College, government and non government schools, Mid Coast Youth Career Services and local MPs Peter Besseling and Robert Oakeshott.

This group has taken on board the messages from Government to think collaboratively and deliver collaboratively. They have responded to this and are showing a willingness to operate in this way. The barriers they are facing is limited funding for the support of:

- a) ongoing facilitation of the forums and
- b) delivery of the services and activities recommended by these forums.

***c. the implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas;***

Proposed changes to income support for students:

There are many changes proposed by the Government to the income support criteria for students, which are scheduled to begin on January 1 2010. Some of these proposed changes are positive and will certainly assist the Government in achieving the goal of equitable access for all current and prospective students. These include increasing the personal income threshold from \$236 to \$400 per fortnight and raising the parental income test threshold from \$32,800 to \$42,559.

There are, however, a number of proposed changes that will act as barriers to equitable access, particularly for rural and regional students. They are as follows:

- Workforce participation criterion: applicant must gain employment of 30 hours per week for at least 18 months during any period of two years after leaving school.

This criterion is unreasonable and unattainable in rural and regional areas of Australia for the following reasons:

1. Unemployment rates are higher in rural and regional areas than in metropolitan areas.<sup>7</sup>
2. The Government is asking 'unskilled' people to find employment, yet these school leavers have generally obtained a HSC or a Certificate II or III level of study and are therefore not competitive with experienced, qualified job seekers.
3. The requirement to find a 30 hour working week will mean applicants will most likely have to use the maximum time frame granted (two years). So those who cannot afford to begin studies until they have qualified for income support are left trying to defer university for two years when universities only defer for one year.
4. The removal of the option to earn a lump sum amount (75 per cent of the maximum rate of pay under Wage Level A of the Australian Pay and

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<sup>7</sup> ABS, 2006 *Census for Population and Housing* indicates that the unemployment rate is much higher in all age groups in the regional electorate of Lyne than in the rest of the state of NSW.

Classification Scale) during a certain time frame and replacing this with a compulsory hour-based working week is highly inequitable for the very reason that a constant 30- hour working week over a period of 18-24 months is rarely available in rural and regional areas.

- Relocation Allowance: This element of income support is necessary and there are two elements to its criteria that deny equitable access for rural and regional students.

They are:

1. The applicant must have qualified for independence first, which means those students who may want to start studies straight away, and are trying to qualify for Youth Allowance whilst studying, will have relocated without the financial assistance that could potentially be available. This allowance should be provided on both a 'means' and 'time of relocation' test, meaning students would have access to at the time they relocate, rather than when they receive Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY.
  2. Given the cost of relocation the amounts of \$4000 in the first year and \$1000 every year thereafter, the Relocation Allowances are arguably insufficient.
- Collateral damage and retrospectivity: The proposed changes to the workforce participation criteria are scheduled to commence on 1 January 2010, leaving many current 'gap year' students and applicants in the lurch.

Those applicants who graduated at the end of 2008 will have spent 12 months following the criteria currently in place, only to find out that they will not qualify due to the proposed changes.

This is unconscionable policy making and I urge the Government to exempt all applicants who left school in December 2008 and allow them to apply for income support under the existing criteria. This way, no student is further marginalised or penalised by their circumstance.

***d. the short- and long-term impact of current and proposed government policies on regional university and TAFE college enrolments;***

Short term:

- The changes to the Youth Allowance criteria will increase the marginalisation of current gap year students. By not allowing them an exemption from the new workforce criteria to the proposed Youth Allowance changes our youth and voters of tomorrow are receiving an awful lesson in civics. This will have an immediate impact on tertiary education enrolments.
- Given that the workforce criteria has stipulated a compulsory 30-hour working week, the whole two year period will be required to achieve the criteria for claiming independence. At this stage it is not universal across all universities that enrolments can be deferred for two years. This again will reduce the number of enrolments.

Long term:

- A clearer vision is needed where tertiary institutions especially in regional Australia are to be moving following the 'Bradley' review of higher education. After a \$2 million feasibility study by the Southern Cross and Charles Sturt universities found a national university was not feasible, what is the future of Government provision for tertiary education in rural and regional Australia?
- Is it now time to seriously look at collaborative, pathway based models that are supported by joint funding pools? Is it time to bring Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training under the one banner?

***e. the adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study;***

In addition to comments already made in relation to the Relocation Allowance which applies to this term of reference, another area which needs to be looked into is the adequacy of affordable accommodation for rural and regional students for relocation purposes.

Currently accommodation on university campuses, also known as residential colleges is charged in the vicinity of \$278.60<sup>8</sup> to \$334<sup>9</sup> per week, which is arguably unaffordable for a full time student who also has course fees, book fees, transport costs and additional social expenses. These costs reinforce the additional financial burden for rural and regional students that are not faced by their metropolitan counterparts who are still able to stay living at home whilst attending university.

***f. the educational needs of rural and regional students;***

- Improved access to broadband:

*"Digital divides exist within school systems, states and nations, as well as across them."*<sup>10</sup>

There is a serious need for an Australia-wide communications network that makes education equally accessible to regional and rural students. There have already been delays in the roll-out of the National Broadband Network which is scheduled to finish in 8 years time.

- Opportunity to have an on-campus experience that does not carry a relocation cost of \$17,000 per annum. Bring the stand alone university presence to rural and regional areas!
- Addressing of the fundamentals that underpin the education journey: Some of the fundamental concepts that contribute to access and retention rates are around the

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<sup>8</sup> Weekly rate at St. Albert's College, UNE, Armidale

<sup>9</sup> Weekly rate at New College, UNSW, Sydney

<sup>10</sup> (Interactive Distance e-Learning for Isolated Communities: Finishing the Jigsaw, Stephen Crump & Colin Boylan U Newcastle and CSU p2)



identity and aspirational needs of rural and regional students. Too often in rural communities, there is a replication of themes such as: "My parents didn't study, so I won't." "I'm not smart enough," "We can't afford it so I won't even bother thinking about it" and "There's no jobs anyway so why bother?" There needs to be a consideration of how this society values higher education qualifications.

- Questions that need to be asked include: What are the available resources? What are the gaps? How do we as a "community of practice" fill those gaps? – By building on collaboration and joint funding pools, and thereby strengthening the already established links and information flows that exist in local communities, change can be generated at the local level to meet the **aspirational** needs of rural and regional students.

***g. the impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities; and***

As provided in above responses.

***h. other related matters***

In addition to the above terms of reference, enclosed is all feedback received by my office from the many rural and regional students and their families from the Lyne electorate in relation to the proposed the Youth Allowance changes.

Some of their emails and letters repeat the points made in this submission. However, it is important that this committee realise how critical it is to follow get these 'education revolution', 'social inclusion' and 'reducing the gap' questions and answers right.

## ***Conclusion:***

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Government measures to provide equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education opportunities for students from rural and regional communities could be improved by reviewing the structure of funding sources and income support.

Currently, organisations within rural and regional communities have to mould their applications to fit funding sources and, as a result, experience frustration and delay when trying to deliver outcomes in education.

Rural and regional students, meanwhile, are being further marginalised by some of the proposed changes to student income support, such as the workforce participation criteria and the impact of these reforms on current 'gap' year students.

**Sent:** Sunday, 17 May 2009 8:10 PM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Budget Changes Disadvantage Regional Students

Hi Rob,

As you are no doubt aware, the new federal budget includes a range of changes to the Youth Allowance system, under the guise of 'Making the System Fairer'. However what these changes fail to take into account is the marginalisation of rural and regional university students, who incur huge costs in relocating to metropolitan areas for their education. As our local member, I'm urging you to support your constituents in making representations in parliament on our behalf. Until now, prospective students were able to defer their tertiary education for a year and satisfy the requirements for financial independence by earning a sum of \$19532 in 18 months, thereby allowing them to qualify for Youth Allowance upon moving to the city and commencing their studies. However, changes to the qualification criteria mean that prospective students must now work full time for a minimum of 18 months, at least 30 hours per week. In my conversations with centrelink, I have been advised that an *average* of 30 hours per week over the 18 month period does not qualify.

In regional areas, there are few opportunities for unskilled school leavers to obtain full time employment, and consequently most gap year students are employed on a casual or part-time basis. As for myself, I am working three part-time jobs (with associated high levels of taxation) sometimes in excess of 50 hours per week, and yet the nature of my employment means that I cannot qualify for Youth Allowance. This is grossly unfair, particularly in view of the fact that students like myself, who graduated in 2008, made their decision to defer university education based on the criteria of the time, and yet centrelink has advised me that in view of the fact that our earnings are reviewed and eligibility assessed at the end of our gap year, the new changes will apply, and therefore exclude us. The retrospective nature of this legislation disenfranchises a huge number of young people like myself, who made their decisions in good faith based on criteria which no longer apply. Needless to say, we do not have the option of changing this decision, and without your representation in the senate, many like myself will have postponed our education, and a year's worth of graduate salary, in the mistaken belief that this would assist us in supporting ourselves at university.

Those students who finish high school this year will be able to make an informed decision as to whether to defer university in order to qualify for assistance, however those in my position have been left out in the cold. Aside from the difficulties I have already explained, regarding the criteria

stipulating full-time employment, the vast majority of tertiary education institutions in Australia only allow course deferment for one year, meaning that even if I and my cohort were all able to find full-time employment in our regional hometowns, by this stage in the year we would have to postpone our education by a further year, thereby forfeiting our accepted university places.

Aside from the obvious injustice in changing the rules halfway through the game, the changes to the Youth Allowance system are inherently discriminatory towards students from rural and regional Australia. Those living in metropolitan areas still have the option of living at home and attending university, whereas those from regional areas simply will not be able to afford the extensive costs of relocating to the city to continue their education. You may assume that this is remedied by the new 'Relocation Scholarship', which has replaced the existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship (reducing it from \$4324 per annum for 4 years to \$4000 in the first year and only \$1000 in subsequent years), however in order to qualify for the Relocation Scholarship you must first be in receipt of Youth Allowance, which is now extremely difficult to qualify for.

Making it more difficult for regional students to attend university will not assist our economy either now, or in the future. I therefore urge you to make representation on our behalf for the government to reconsider these changes, or at the very least, remove the retrospective element of the legislation so that those who have already undertaken gap years are not disadvantaged.

Thank you,

Heidi Pett

**Sent:** Sunday, 17 May 2009 5:45 PM

**To:** Brown, Bob (Senator); Xenophon, Nick (Senator); Fielding, Steve (Senator); Oakeshott, Robert (MP); Ellis, Kate (MP); Gillard, Julia (MP)

**Subject:** Youth Allowance changes

Year 12 of 2008 have recently been highly disadvantaged by the governments changes to youth allowance released in the new budget. I believe this is highly unfair and will cause huge financial issues for many already struggling rural families.

Please do not let this happen.

Many students rely on earning the \$18,000 in 18months to support themselves through uni. Without these payments they will need to work extreme hours to pay for textbooks, rent, bills, food, transport, relocation (most rural students), which will greatly affect the

quality of learning they receive.

The worst part of this process is that no media seems to have picked up on the issue. As high profile personalities we must look to you to help us spread the message so we can put pressure on the government to remove this change.

Your assistance on this issue would be greatly appreciated.

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Sent: Saturday, 16 May 2009 4:51 PM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
Subject: Changes to youth allowance criteria

Dear Rob,

We are contacting you relating to the changes to the criteria for gaining the youth allowance. We currently have a son doing his gap year in Darwin working hard to qualify for the criteria as they stood, it seems now his efforts will be in vain. We feel these changes disadvantage anyone living outside the metropolitan areas because they invariably have to live away from home to pursue their education. The youth allowance made this relocation possible for families of moderate incomes. We would appreciate if you could investigate this matter.

Regards David & Judy Pink

Sent: Friday, 15 May 2009 11:48 AM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
Subject: Feedback from your APH Web Page

Please do not respond to this email

Comments: Dear Mr Oakeshott,  
Re: The Commonwealth Budget - Education Overview -

The proposed changes in the definition of independence will severely disadvantage families and school leavers from regional areas. Our daughter has been a responsible student and planned to work in her gap year 2010 to save toward university expenses (2011), and in turn qualify for the Youth Allowance.

Families in the middle income bracket will be hit hard by this change. Many students have to leave their home town to attend uni and the costs of accommodation and other expenses may prevent many young regional students from attending university.

I sincerely hope you will oppose this change.

Helen Miles

Sent: Mon 18/05/2009 9:39 PM

The Hon. Member for Lyne,  
Mr Rob Oakeshott,  
Port Macquarie Office

Dear Rob,

I am shocked and alarmed at the proposed changes to achieving the criteria to receive Youth Allowance.

At the beginning of 2009, after research and locating the information about proving independence, my daughter decided to defer her placement into Newcastle University, until 2010 when she plans to begin her tertiary studies.

Through 2009 she has been working at a few hospitality jobs and is struggling to achieve the goal of earning \$19,532 in eighteen months since her last exam to qualify for Youth Allowance. Her work has been in local businesses as well as being self-employed, after gaining her ABN, and is doing artwork, music teaching, cooking and contract cleaning. It has not always been easy to locate enough shifts or to find employers happy to provide award wages and paperwork for her proof. The struggle has been met with determination and constant recommitting to her financial goal.

This news that the changes proposed are for introduction on 1st January 2010 cut short the promised time frame, so she is one of those students taking a gap year, this year, who have had "the rug pulled from beneath them", and find themselves in a completely different "ball park".

In this locality, it will be very difficult to find a job providing 30 hours of work per week. In which regional centre is this available to a young person on leaving school (as it is the country, rural, young person who is most facing this challenge)? And must she start earning again, on an hourly basis (30 hours per week for a minimum of one and half years)?

While I realise there is a plus in terms of the Relocation Allowance, it seems this is only available to those who initially qualify for the Youth Allowance.

**It seems that an amendment is needed to enforce new criteria consistently from 2011, (or even from July 2010 would be preferable), so that these students who deferred for 2009 and currently in the process of earning their \$19,532 aren't caught short and left out.**

I worry about these young people becoming disenchanted with government processes, and gaining a mistrust of a system of rules that they previously accepted as fair criteria.

Previously I had promoted this process for young people I teach as it gives them experience of the world, the working life and a range of people and situations. In many cases, working in this gap year can be an incentive to study, learn, gain tertiary qualifications, and find a place to contribute to society that uses, extends and values their academic nature and skills.

Please give this issue your absolute commitment, on behalf of many young Australians who have not yet voted in an election, but are forming political views on this their first experience of politics which directly affects their lives. These regional county and rural students need a voice in Parliament, which is sympathetic to their genuine reasons for seeking independence as they start a new life away from home.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Beyer

**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 May 2009 3:01 PM  
**To:** Titterington, Jane (R. Oakeshott, MP)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Please defeat changes to Youth Allowance

Dear Sir,

As a parent of three young men, two already studying at university and one aspiring to undertake degree studies, I ask you on their behalf to do whatever you can to defeat the Government's proposed changes to Youth Allowance, announced in the latest Federal budget.

We have one son already on Youth Allowance (3rd year), one already at

university (1st year) persevering with Centrelink to get Youth Allowance (he has qualified but is being mucked around), and one son who'll be sitting for his HSC in 2010.

Even with the assistance of one Youth Allowance 'package' so far, we are finding it difficult to financially support our sons' education aspirations because they must live away from home to study.

You will be doing parents like us - and the Government's touted 'education economy' - a favour by helping to defeat the proposed changes.

Thank you for reading this letter.

Regards,

Rob Smith  
Port Macquarie

**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 May 2009 3:08 PM  
**To:** Titterington, Jane (R. Oakeshott, MP)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Changes to the youth allowance are wrong

Dear Sir,

I am sure you are aware of the wider discontent, but I also want to voice my opinion on the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance in the recent budget announcements. This is especially cruel to the students who in good faith, are currently doing a gap year with the sole intention to earn the \$19,500 to get the youth allowance and help them and their parents cover some uni expenses. My son is one of many from 2008 yr 12 who is now being penalised for being conscientious and proactive in this endeavour. Now it seems he has wasted a year. In the current economic climate it is not easy for young people to gain enough employment to get the \$19,500 (My son has 3 casual jobs trying to reach the limit). While the parental income test has been increased to \$42,559 this is well below the average middle income 2 parent working family who are paying their taxes trying to do the best for our family. It makes a mockery of the governments so called "Innovation and Higher Education System for the 21st Century" measure and will just result in less people going to university. I urge you to do everything in your power to make this government reverse this stupid decision.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Baldwin  
Port Macquarie



**The Hon Julia Gillard MP**

**CC: Robert Oakeshott MP**

**Deputy Prime Minister;**

**Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations;**

**Minister for Education;**

**Minister for Social Inclusion.**

**House of Representatives**

**Parliament House**

**Canberra ACT 2600**

**Email: [Julia.Gillard.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Julia.Gillard.MP@aph.gov.au)**

Dear Ms Gillard

I am writing an appeal to you to defer by 6 months to July 2010 or reverse the budgetary decision to tighten the "Youth Allowance Criteria" changes to take place in January 2010. This appeal is on behalf of our family and I believe all rural and regional families that will be disadvantaged by this decision.

We have 2 children, Stephanie who completed year 12 in 2008 and Adam who is completing year 12 this year (2009). We live in a regional area and our children will have to leave home and move to a city to attend University.

We accept that Adam will be more prepared for these changes but still disadvantaged. However Stephanie is a different story.

Stephanie worked very hard to achieve a high UAI result and did so in 2008.

She applied for a "Chemical Engineering" placing at UNSW.

Because of our financial situation she deferred her placing for 12 months to enable her to go to work and earn an income high enough to satisfy the present "Youth Allowance Criteria" and build some savings.

Her placing can not be deferred any further

Her decision was based on the reliance of receiving financial support in the form of "Youth Allowance" which stood at the time of that decision.

Stephanie is only one of many rural and regional teenagers who are aspiring to become better educated and be useful contributors to our future society.

The budgetary decision discriminates against a group of students who are generally less well off than their peers living in cities. This flies in the face of the "Education Revolution" stand that your Government took prior to being elected.

I appeal to you to at least defer the criteria changes to July 2010 and allow the 2008 school leavers that have made irreversible decisions based on the present Youth Allowance Criteria to continue their path and not cancel their present placing at University.

Thankyou for your consideration in this matter

Regards



Alex Domanski

Sent: Wednesday, 20 May 2009 2:37 PM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
Subject: Feedback from your APH Web Page

Please do not respond to this email

Comments: Dear Rob

Reasons why changes to the independence criteria for Youth Allowance are a bad idea:

1. Young people need to be learning independence (financially). My adult sons do not want to be receiving financial assistance from their parents. They want to stand on their own two feet.
2. Gap years are very important for development of young people in maturity and study readiness. The changes to the independence test, coupled with the inability to defer a university place for longer than one year, make the gap years much less attractive.

It may be the case that some parents are providing their children with the funds to show their "independence" thereby rorting the system. This change is not the way to fix it.

I look forward to your support in putting forward more workable changes, which provide young adults with real independence and incentive to take on tertiary studies.

Louise Dix.

Dear Zita/Rob,

Thank you for your advice.

I have been reviewing the Bradley Report and notice many, many statements within it regarding the under-representation of regional students in higher education, one of the main factors cited obviously being the cost of students having to live away from home. This is acknowledged by a statement in the report, **"However, the additional living and study costs associated with higher education enrolment, particularly for those students who need to move away from home to study, are considerable"** The report claims that the recommendations are designed to address this under-representation yet the proposals have the effect of making it even harder for many regional students to study their course of choice.

Turning to the plight of those currently undertaking the "gap year", there seems to be a misunderstanding in some quarters that the current earnings criterion requires students to work for 18 months and then commence their course. This is incorrect - they have to earn the required \$'s in the 18 month period since leaving school but they may commence studies before the 18 months is up and they are not eligible to receive the Youth Allowance until the 18 months has expired. This is important as it means they could have commenced studies at the beginning of 2010 but they would have to support themselves for about three months until the payments commence - something they are happy to do. The Budget proposals mean that this will not be possible - they will have to defer until mid-2010 (if their chosen course offers mid-year intake) or, more likely, defer until 2011. Most Universities allow

only a one year deferral so they effectively have to commence the competitive enrolment procedure again. This is grossly unfair on those students who have planned their future and are working hard to achieve that plan.

The Bradley Review and Ministerial media releases indicate that the current criteria will be "grandfathered" for students who have already qualified (presumably before 1/1/2010). The current Centrelink YA application process allows applications to be made up to 3 months before the **course commences** and in the past applications have been made well before the May "eligibility" date is reached (I have two sons who did this in recent years). Payments then commence from the date of eligibility. I'm wondering if there is room to lobby the Government to consider that the current gap-year students who have met the current income criterion before 1/1/2010 should be able to apply in December, three months before their course commences and therefore complying with the current Centrelink "rules" - that is, they are included in the "grandfathered" arrangement having met the current criteria before the cut-off date. The Government will argue that the budgetted savings will not be achieved but if they need to find savings I suggest they look to the 22,000+ "independent" students identified in the Bradley Review who currently live at home (surely a contradiction in itself) and the large number of independent students who live away from home by choice rather than necessity.

Regards,

Tony Green

**Sent:** Thursday, 21 May 2009 1:02 PM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Youth Allowance - Government is Missing the Point

To date rural students with middle income parents have addressed this inequity by working a gap year to gain independent status and therefore qualify for Youth Allowance. This is not something that they would do if they had a choice. They would rather go off to uni straight away with their less affluent, or more affluent mates, and not have to later absorb the financial hit of receiving their first professional salary 12 months after their cohorts. The removal of this means of funding university accommodation is a big set-back for our rural students, and the reduction in accommodation /relocation scholarships from \$17K to \$7K compounds the effect. We have one group of very

disillusioned students in Port Macquarie and they are looking to you as their local member to stand up on their behalf.

In last night's TripleJ interview, Julia Gillard repeatedly stressed that this is a budget measure with the implication that they will not move on this and that it is a double dissolution trigger if opposed. However, on this morning's news I noted that the Deputy Treasurer is willing to negotiate on changes to Employee Share Ownership provisions.

So! Even though the government views eighteen year olds as a softer target, believe that there is room for negotiation on this and that we should firstly remedy the retrospective way in which these proposals have blind-sided kids from the bush who are taking a gap year this year.

Students who have already been accepted into courses in other towns, who have deferred, and who meet the current criteria for independence should be granted Youth Allowance on the basis that it is grossly unfair to move the goal posts halfway through the game. These students will be through the system in four years so this suggestion could easily be funded by measures such as :-

- Phasing in additional support for those undertaking Masters degrees more slowly.
- Reducing the age of independence from 25 to 22 by 2013 instead of 2012
- Increasing the Personal Income Test to \$350 instead of \$400 (who needs \$400 on top of Youth Allowance?)

None of the cost savings suggested above would be affecting anyone retrospectively.

Alternatively, the Coal Industry profit was between \$40 billion and \$50 billion last year but there are measures in the budget to give them \$2 billion to clean up their act. Surely the coal industry, given that they have just been let off the hook on carbon trading, would not complain too much if some of this money instead went to kids from the bush.

If possible I would very much like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss what you can do to help in this regard.

thank you

Kim Pett

**Sent:** Thursday, 21 May 2009 5:25 PM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Paid Work in our area.

Dear Rob,

I was so pleased to read in yesterday's Port News that you are aware of the difficulties facing this year's and future gap-year students.

I read the front page article about our fine young people, and the limbo state they are in - now needing 30 hours/week for 18 months to prove their independence.

I read your comments, and then I read the "Positions Vacant" columns. ...

there is NOT ONE advertisement which could represent a "30 hour a week" for 18+ months!

A difficulty is finding the work.

Finding work which is paid correctly to the Ind. Rel Award.

Finding work where a pay slip is provided for their documentation and proof of independence.

Finding work where the shifts are not limited to less than the amount where the employer has to pay superannuation contributions.

Many of these young people work more than one job for that reason.

Given these challenges, no wonder these young people are shocked, as they have been strictly working to the rules, until now.

Are they to now start looking for 30 hours/week work?

Does their 18 months start again from now?

If they earn their \$19,500 before the 1st January, when changes come in, are they able to have it count?

Thank you on behalf of our youth, for considering these matters with focus and empathy,

Sincerely,

Christine Beyer

Bonny Hills.

**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 May 2009 9:23 PM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** Changes to Youth Allowance

Dear Rob

I am writing regarding the profound effect that the budgetary changes to the Youth Allowance Scheme will have on students who completed Year 12 in 2008 and are CURRENTLY on a gap year.

These students deferred their positions at University in early 2009 so they could fulfill the requirements for independence and qualify for Youth Allowance. The new changes are grossly unfair to THIS group of students...

1. They will have to work for an extra year to qualify BUT they are not able to defer their accepted (but deferred) university position for that second year.
2. If these new criteria were known before the start of 2009 then many of the students would have made different choices ie. either not deferring at all or not applying for a university position at all.
3. Many students from regional areas will now not qualify for Youth Allowance or a Relocation Allowance even though they MUST leave home to attend University.
4. This change is effectively retrospective for this group of students and grossly unfair.

Students still at school will have the opportunity to adjust to these new changes but for all those currently 5 months into a gap year with their University acceptance deferred, what can they do?



I would argue that these changes have made it unfairly difficult for this group of students to attend University and as such suggest that they be allowed to continue their efforts to qualify for Youth Allowance under the rules present at the time they deferred.

Thank you

Bill Jubb

Port Macquari

**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 May 2009 8:30 PM

**To:** senator.xenaphon@aph.gov.au; Fielding, Steve (Senator); Oakeshott, Robert (MP); Ellis, Kate (MP); Gillard, Julia (MP); Truss, Warren (MP); c.payne.mp@aph.gov.au; Mirabella, Sophie (MP)

**Subject:** Changes to Youth Allowance disadvantaging prospective students.

My name is Candice Kuwert. I completed my HSC in 2008 in Port Macquarie and am currently undertaking a GAP year, due to the need to become financially independent, as my parents both work fulltime however are low income earners, and will be unable to support me financially once I go to university. As a high achiever in the HSC, I have been accepted into Charles Sturt University to begin a Bachelor of Physiotherapy in 2010, which is only deferrable for one year. I will be living 900km away from home, which will incur great expenses, and require me to be able to attain government assistance. Living in a tourist town where many jobs are seasonal, achieving the initial goal of earning \$19,532 in 18 months in order to become eligible for government assistance is a difficult task. Now hearing that we may have to have worked at least 30 hours a week for 18 months in order to achieve this financial assistance, makes higher education seem almost impossible for many students. Due to the current economic crisis, employment is extremely hard to come by, with many jobs and hours constantly being cut back, and many adults are struggling to get 30 hours of work per week, let alone students undertaking a gap year. The labour government are supposed to be creating an education revolution, however are making it more and more difficult for people like myself to complete tertiary education. Having spent 13 years studying hard in order to attain a good HSC result and be able to move into the career of my choice, I feel disappointed to think that this may have been a waste of time, and I may not be able to continue into tertiary study after all. Not only will this limit my own future, but it will also have a detrimental impact on the economy for the future when many young people cannot become trained in necessary professions such as health and education. Taking a Gap year, was not a choice for me but rather a necessity, and so I hope that my voice will be heard, and actions will be taken to enable students to receive youth allowance more equitably, allowing a more positive and successful future for us as individuals, and the Australian population. Please respond.

Regards, Candice Kuwert

**Sent:** Friday, 22 May 2009 10:10 AM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Tony and Chantelle Berry

Hi Rob

Re: Youth Allowance System

Just a quick note to alert you to numerous hostile young people doing a gap year before starting university.

Wayne Swan and Co. have made some pretty smart young people coming through very cranky and dedicated life long non labour voters. His proposed changes leave many young adults mid stream in a difficult position and with difficult decisions to make.

I would appreciate any chance you get to have a say for the new voters all turning 18 this year or last.

Below is an excerpt from a Facebook commentary that gives a clear quick overview.

Regards

Tony

The new federal budget includes a range of changes to the Youth Allowance System, under the guise of 'Making the System Fairer', however what these changes fail to take into account is the marginalisation of middle Australia, particularly those from rural and regional areas, who incur substantial costs in moving to the city to further their education. The changes make it much more difficult to qualify as financially independent, and therefore receive Youth Allowance.

Andrew Trouson in The Australian last week explained it in the simplest way I've been able to find:

-'Students have previously been able to prove their independence by working part-time for at least 15 hours a week for two years, or earning at least \$19,500 in an 18-month period. Under the new criteria announced in the budget, students will instead have to work for a minimum of 30 hours a week for AT LEAST 18 months in any two-year period.'

Those students who have already taken a gap year and calculated their earnings to satisfy the previous criteria of \$19 532 in 18 months have had the rules changed halfway through the game. This is effectively retrospective legislation, as those who have already undertaken gap years and deferred their education don't have the option of changing this decision, and most cannot opt to gain full-time employment (even if full-time jobs

could be found for the thousands of young people affected by these changes) and take another year off, as this would forfeit their accepted places at university.

The existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship (worth \$4324 per annum) has been replaced with a diminished 'Relocation Scholarship', which is only worth \$4000 in the first year, and \$1000 in subsequent years, and is also dependent on being in receipt of Youth Allowance in the first place. Obviously, the university/your landlord doesn't reduce your rent just because you've been living there for a year. Making it harder for young people to go to university won't assist our economy either now, or in the future.

So even if you're all 'urrrrrrggggghhhh, facebook groups, how uncivilised', we need you to get involved by emailing senators, your local member, media outlets, or q&a (Wayne Swan is apparently appearing next week).

*Tony Berry*

Manager  
Sales and Marketing

Port Macquarie

Sent: Sunday, 24 May 2009 8:03 AM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

Subject: Feedback from your APH Web Page

Please do not respond to this email

Comments: My daughter is finishing Year 12 this year and the changes to the Youth Allowance scheme will mean a huge difference to her attending university. I currently have a daughter at Newcastle Uni who worked her gap year in 2007 and the Youth Allowance has been a relief financially for our family. Please help to return the previous system as it will change her future. Thanking you, Kym Peir

Name: Mrs Kym Peir

Port Macquarie. 2444

Mr Robert Oakshott MP

Federal Member for Lyne

1/143 Horton Street

Port Macquarie NSW 2444

Dear Rob,

I am writing to ask what action can be taken to try to have the changes to the Independent Living Allowance paid to university students altered. The changes place rural students at a great disadvantage, and are especially unfair to the students who are, at present, taking their gap year.

We have two children at university, a son in third year at Newcastle University, and a daughter in second year at the University of NSW and a third child who completed the HSC in 2008 and is currently taking a gap year in order to earn money to enable her to go to uni in 2010. We also have a fourth child in year 11 who will be going on to tertiary education soon. There is no way we could afford to pay for rent, food etc for them while they are away studying. They have taken a gap year to enable them to earn enough money to qualify for the Independent Living Allowance.

Rural students, in most cases, have to move away from home in order to undertake their studies. This involves a large expense, quite apart from the course fees. Under the present scheme students only need to take a one year gap period and, if they have been able to earn the required amount are

able to start their studies the following year. (even though the allowance was not payable until about May of that year.) Under the proposed scheme students would need to take a two year gap as they would be required to work for 18 months and most courses start at the beginning of the year. This is an unacceptable gap for students wanting to get on with their career goals.

Making changes, without warning, that will affect students at present in their gap year is also unfair. Our daughter made plans to work for most of the year in order to earn enough money to qualify for the Independent Living Allowance, and allow herself to be set up for university in 2010 ( money for a laptop etc). She then planned to travel overseas for a couple of months and return in time to move to Newcastle or Sydney and commence her studies. In order to achieve this she has been working at two jobs-often up to 12 hours a day. In an area where jobs can be hard to come by this is quite an achievement, but one mirrored by other gap year students. To be told that the rules have suddenly changed is unfair.

As a side issue, requiring these students to work another year before starting their studies, is potentially taking jobs away from other young people who are intending to stay in the area.

The Government needs to be made aware of the huge negative impact this will make on rural students

We would be grateful if you could make representation to the Government on our behalf.

Yours truly,

Julie Roberts

**Sent:** Monday, 25 May 2009 9:39 AM

**To:** Pyne, Chris (MP); Oakeshott, Robert (MP); Brown, Bob (Senator); Xenophon, Nick (Senator); Gillard, Julia (MP); Ellis, Kate (MP); Mirabella, Sophie (MP); Truss, Warren (MP)

**Subject:** Youth Allowance changes

I write to protest the proposed changes to Youth Allowance for students of Independent Status

I ask that you do not allow these changes as stated below to pass through the senate. Those of us in regional areas with children who wish to continue their learning at university, are forced (not choose) to send them away from their homes to do this. We require fair financial assistance to do this. If a young adult can work for the 12-18 months prior to going to uni and earn Independent Youth Allowance then this is a great assistance. Changing the rules to a minimum of 30 hours a week work will preclude the benefits of the gap year and will also stop many youth continuing their study due purely for financial reasons.

Further info below

Recent budget proposals remove the independence criteria of earning approximately \$19,532 in 18 months to qualify for Youth Allowance and replace the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship with a diminished Relocation Scholarship that is also contingent on being in receipt of Youth Allowance. These proposals profoundly affect regional students who have been accepted into metropolitan tertiary institutions but have taken a gap year this year due to economic circumstances.

Removal of the independence criteria is retrospective in that those students taking a gap year this year based this decision on the independence test criteria in place when they left school yet no grandfathering clauses are evident in the budget papers. These students may not have taken a gap year, or may have chosen less desirable courses in their home towns if they had not been advised by CentreLink Officers and Careers Advisors that they would qualify for Youth Allowance when they start the courses into which they have already been admitted. This is grossly unfair. These students do not have the option of working for another year to meet the more stringent criteria of working full time for 18 months as most tertiary institutions only allow a deferral of one year.

These proposals discriminate heavily against regional students who do not have tertiary educational establishments in their home towns. Metropolitan students can make the transition from school to university with little additional financial impact on their parents as they simply go to university instead of school and have a wide choice of local courses. Regional students however are slugged with substantial accommodation costs as they have to leave home to attend tertiary institutions. Up until now, non-metropolitan students could compensate for this disadvantage by working hard during a gap year to meet the independence criteria required to qualify for Youth Allowance. They suffered the disadvantage not being able to continue their studies immediately on finishing school and thereby delaying receipt of a professional salary by one year, but at least they could eventually attend a tertiary institution without imposing a financial burden on their families. The proposed amendments to the independence test now remove this opportunity and leave middle income regional families with a substantial financial impost when compared with their metropolitan counterparts. This impost is compounded in that qualifying for the new Relocation Scholarship is contingent on having already qualified for Youth Allowance.

Liz Gillroy

RE: CHANGES TO THE BUDGET DISADVANTAGE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

I am writing to object to the recent Federal Government's plan to eliminate Youth Allowance for those seeking financial independence. This will affect our family first hand as we have a daughter who has deferred a university placement in order to qualify for the independent allowance. Thousands of rural students like our daughter, will be disadvantaged by these unfair changes. Students are unable to defer a university placement for more than one year, and subsequently further disadvantaged as to whether the four additional rural points will be still applicable. My daughter, again, like thousands of others, currently works three casual jobs to meet independent status. The new arrangements requiring thirty hours of work per week for 18 months to 2 years will virtually be unobtainable in most country towns. With the Country's current economic crisis, how does the Rudd Government propose to create employment opportunities for these young adults when the official unemployment rate for the country is at it's highest? Where are all these jobs going to come from? In turn this extended time period will result in students struggling to meet the new criteria and many may not bother to pursue a university degree. Rural parents are already burdened with large financial costs in sending their children to university. These include relocation costs, transport, medical and accommodation including hefty bonds. Although the youth allowance greatly assists in meeting some of these expenses, depending on where the child attends university and the location of their accommodation, financial assistance from parents is also essential. Most rural students have no other choice but to move away to pursue a university degree. Rural students are already disadvantaged by not being able to continue their studies immediately after finishing their HSC. This will further delay them receiving a professional salary by two years and further impact the financial burden imposed on their families. What genius, sorry Government Minister came up with this idea?

The Rudd Government is unbelievable! On one hand they are handing out money through the Stimulus package and with the other, taking away an allowance. One must conclude that the Treasurer has finally worked out we can't afford all these hand outs!!

Kind Regards

Donna & Michael O'Brien

**Sent:** Monday, 25 May 2009 4:04 PM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Objection to Proposed Budget Changes To Youth Allowance

Dear Mr Oakeshott

My daughter recently completed Year 12 in 2008 and had left home in December last year to travel to Perth and stay with friends to enable her to obtain work to qualify under the independent criteria for Youth Allowance and has deferred her University Acceptance. She is presently working as a casual 36 hours a week. Her chosen career is Physiotherapy and she studied extremely hard to earn her respective acceptance into University.

These recent budget proposals regarding the changes to the Youth Allowance and the independence criteria will profoundly affect regional students who have been accepted into metropolitan tertiary institutions but have taken a gap year this year due to economic circumstances.

Removal of the independence criteria is retrospective in that those students taking a gap year this year based this decision on the independence test criteria in place when they left school yet no grandfathering clauses are evident in the budget papers. My daughter may not have taken a gap year, as her course does not allow a mid year intake and there for she must take up her studies in March 2010 or loose her place. This is grossly unfair. These students do not have the option of working for another year to meet the more stringent criteria of working full time for 18 months as most tertiary institutions only allow a deferral of one year.

These proposals discriminate heavily against regional students who do not have tertiary educational establishments in their home towns. Metropolitan students can make the transition from school to university with little additional financial impact on their parents as they simply go to university instead of school and have a wide choice of local courses.

Regional students however are slugged with substantial accommodation costs as they have to leave home to attend tertiary institutions. Up until now, non-metropolitan students could compensate for this disadvantage by working hard during a gap year to meet the independence criteria required to qualify for Youth Allowance. They suffered the disadvantage not being able to continue their studies immediately on finishing school and thereby delaying receipt of a professional salary by one year, but at least they could eventually attend a tertiary institution without imposing a financial burden on their families. The proposed amendments to the independence test now remove this opportunity and leave middle income regional families with a substantial financial impost when compared with their



metropolitan counterparts. This impost is compounded in that qualifying for the new *Relocation Scholarship* is contingent on having already qualified for Youth Allowance."

This Budget Proposal is grossly unfair to those students already on their gap year and also we should not be discriminated against because we live in the country.

I would appreciate any objections that you could pass on I strongly request you

PLEASE VOTE AGAINST THESE CHANGES

Thanking you

Helen Patterson

**Sent:** Friday, 22 May 2009 11:21 AM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:**

Good morning Robert,

I am requesting that you oppose the amendments to Youth Allowance as presented in the budget. The proposals do not indicate that the government understands the impacts of these on young people, particularly rural youth. I am also particularly concerned about the situation for 2008 HSC graduands who commenced their quest for independence under one set of rules and now find the goalposts shifted for them with no apparent allowances!!

Please refer to my attached letter

Regards

Robyn McMullen

May20, 2009

Dear Minister ,

I am writing to request your support in response to a most unfair change proposed in the recent budget. I am writing from the perspective of a university lecturer involved in the delivery of a first year subject at Charles Sturt University (Wagga Wagga Campus) that has a large cohort of rural students, and as a parent caught up in this fiasco. Consequently, I am in a position to discuss this with students and to also experience first hand the immense impacts of this decision. The issue I am referring to is the proposed change to the current conditions for 2008 Year 12 graduate students to access independent youth allowance through Centrelink. As you would be aware until a week or so ago students who were seeking to be independent needed to earn approx \$19500 over a period of 18months following their HSC completion, in order to qualify. Now, the rules have changed to become a period of full time (30 hpw) employment of 18months over a 2 year qualification period. **My primary concern is for those students who completed their HSC in 2008, and on the basis of the rules existing at that time made the decision to defer their university position and seek full time work in order to earn the money required to satisfy the independent youth allowance requirement.**

Where does this decision leave these young people now? It is a travesty that the government has made the decision to leave these young people adrift.... they must now decide whether they should shelve their university plans (unfortunately a likelihood for many- particularly those in rural areas where it will be particularly difficult to qualify now) ,or delay their transition to university for a further 12 months- an eternity for young people who had the promise of university in 2010 within their grasp. **The thoughtfully considered hopes, dreams, and aspirations of our future leaders should not be 'toyed with' at whim, and I am absolutely disgusted at the lack of sensitivity of the government to this group of young people.**

In recent years, you would be aware this has been a valid pathway for many young people, in fact actively encouraged by promotion through schools and career advisors who recognise the advantages of independence as a 'rite of passage' for our youth on the road to adulthood, and the benefits of an additional year at home in terms of emotional maturity and independence. This is even more important for country youth who often do not get the option in many cases to live at home while they study....which adds hugely to the financial load of post school study for the family. This is just another example of lack of empathy, and indeed more simply understanding of the functioning of rural communities . To give you an idea of accommodation costs – the costs of accommodation per annum at ANU is now around \$13000- a cost in many cases not incurred by city dweller who have a choice of university , each of which are each accessible by public transport and within reasonable distance from their homes. I predict even further decreases in young rural people articulating to university as a result of this....and that would also tell you that the skill base of rural communities will be further undermined.

I have been horrified also by Julia Gillard's responses to questions posed by media in relation to these changes ...understanding of the impact of these issues on young 2008 HSC graduates and their families is distinctly lacking. My husband and I work extremely hard to support our children, and have made (and continue to make) many personal sacrifices in terms of quality of life to earn the income to do this. But despite our commitment , our income is still insufficient to allow us to meet daily costs of sustaining a family of 6, and to pay accommodation costs associated with allowing our children the choice of where/what they may study. So even under the new arrangements we would still not qualify for the 'more generous allowances for qualification for assistance'.

So, now the rules have changed retrospectively....many of these 2008 HSC school leavers are NOW half way through their commitment to this path and have been working 2-3 jobs (full time jobs are difficult to find for unskilled school leavers) to earn the requirement. Can you imagine the uproar that imposition of changes in taxation rules would bring if introduced retrospectively? Can you imagine the disillusionment and huge disappointment that this change has brought?

In summary, I am requesting

1. Particular consideration of the plight of 2008 HSC leavers – if the amendment to the changes to Youth Allowance are ratified, there MUST be the option for students currently engaged in their gap year to ensure they qualify according to the rules that were in place at the completion of their HSC i.e. the 18months to earn the approx \$19500. The new situation would then apply to 2009 HSC students who can make their decisions fully informed of the qualification requirements- unfair as they may be!!
2. Consideration of the award of independent youth allowance (for all HSC students) who may "rort" the system by living at home on independent youth allowance.

Please advocate on our behalf. We are depending on you

With Regards

Robyn McMullen

**cc to Member for Lyne  
Robert Oakeshott**

**Sent:** Thursday, 21 May 2009 10:53 PM

**To:** Gillard, Julia (MP)

**Cc:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** changes in youth allowance eligibilty discriminate against country families

21 May 2009

To the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education  
Julia Gillard  
Parliament House  
Canberra

Dear Ms Gillard

We would like to draw your attention in this open letter to the hardship the rule changes for Youth Allowance will have on our children being country students. The expectation that school leavers will find work for 30 hours per week is unrealistic in rural areas.

As most university courses only allow for a 12 month deferment of course placement, this also counts against country students who are working to become independent. Obviously students cannot be expected to begin their university course and work 30 hours per week at the same time. it would also be impossible to make up the 18 months full-time work by taking one gap year and completing the 30 hours per week during the holidays over 24 months - their simply would not be enough time.

Your government had made some helpful measures to assist those moving more than 90 minutes away from home with \$4000 in the first year and \$1000 for each following year. What a pity this will

not be available to thousands of country students who know they will not be able to secure the full-time work requirements to qualify for Youth Allowance, to receive it.

This is a typical case of city people not understanding the hardship of those living in regional Australia. We have 2 sons at university on Youth Allowance in Sydney. Their total Allowance is spent on rental accommodation. We assist them with living expenses where we can but they still live well below the poverty line. We have 2 daughters in years 11 and 12, who may not qualify until they are 22 years old while they are studying away from home.

The changes your government has made leaves our family either in serious financial hardship for the next few years or means our 2 daughters will be 2 years behind the careers of their city counterparts.

Obviously, if the Bradley Review of Higher Education found 49% on Youth Allowance lived at home with household incomes above \$80,000 - they are the people who should be cut back - not country students!

A couple of solutions seem obvious. Tighten up on CentreLink monitoring of those applying for the independent Youth allowance and insist that students applying for and receiving Youth Allowance at the independent rate are living far enough away from home that they can't just go home everyday, as well as 'renting' from someone other than a member of their immediate family.

Yours sincerely

Philip and Jan von Schoenberg  
Port Macquarie

**cc to Member for Lyne  
Robert Oakeshott**

18 May 2009  
Robert Oakeshott  
Member for Lyne  
Australian Parliament

Dear Rob

We are writing to you to express our dismay at some of the changes to the Youth Allowance scheme as proposed in the Commonwealth 2009-10 Budget Making the System Fairer scheme. We also want to attempt to show how those changes will unfairly impact on our 2 school age daughters still at school. However, we agree with the intent and many of the proposed measures of Making the System Fairer as we understand them and do not want to be misinterpreted as opposing the entire package.

The change in how a young person under the age of 22 proves their financial independence will disadvantage students from regional areas. Working 30 hours per week for 18 months within a 24

month period is unrealistic because regional students have to leave their full time employment when they move.

Also, full-time employment is just not available to young people living in the country compared to their city counterparts still living at home.

The net result is that young people from regional areas will not be able to afford to start university for at least 2 years after their HSC if their parents combined income is greater than the new threshold of \$42,000. This would not be the case for city students because of their ability to travel to potential full-time employment whilst still living at home. This is compounded by the fact that most Universities do not allow candidates to defer course entry for more than 1 year.

The financial impact of these changes on our family will be extreme. We have 2 sons studying in Sydney whilst receiving independent Youth Allowance and rental assistance but which isn't enough to survive on. One son's Course demands are too rigorous to allow him do part time work during term. The other son's post graduate studies are supplemented by part time tutoring. They will both be at Uni until the end of 2012 (all being well) which means we have to supplement their incomes because they are both below the poverty line.

We have 1 daughter currently doing her HSC. She has just been offered a Gap year position for 12 months in 2010 which would have made her eligible for the independent youth Allowance rate under the existing provisions in 2011.

Now she will either have to take her chances and reapply for a UAC position competing with 2010 HSC graduates in 2011 or we will have to fully fund her until she is 22 years of age.

Our youngest child will finish her HSC in 2010 and will be able to start university in 2011.

Therefore, we will likely have to support all 4 of our children living in the city to attend university for 2 years without any government financial assistance for 2 of them knowing that all 4 will be living under the poverty line. Many other middle income earning families like ours will find themselves with the same substantial financial burden.

We ask you to represent our circumstances to the Minister for Education.

We understand that some individuals have been rorting the current requirement to earn \$18,850 over an 18 month period, but that is because Centre Link monitoring procedures can't be stringent enough to catch them. Surely, it would be more equitable to review and tighten Centre Link procedures of what is accepted as a reasonable criteria of financial independence; the ability to earn \$362.50 per week for 12 months.

Sincerely Yours

Jan and Philip von Schoenberg  
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

Zita/Rob,

Oh that it was that easy!

One of the reasons that "independent" status for YA was attractive was that it had certainty - qualify or not qualify. As a self employed parent (as many regional parents are) the "Parental Means Test" is a minefield with changing circumstances. It is not only parental income that counts for eligibility - you also have to consider the "Family Actual Means Test" and the "Family Assets Test". The "rules" are vague when it comes to parental income as to whether to use the current or previous year's income. For salary earners with a stable income that is usually not a problem but for self employed people or business owners it brings in the "Family Actual Means Test" which is not very well defined but it effectively means if your income fluctuates then the YA amount fluctuates and your eligibility could cease. It doesn't say what happens to YA already paid if you go above the cut-off but I believe you can be required to repay any payments made. The "Assets Test" is also more difficult for business owners because "Assessable Assets" include "the value of any businesses and farms, including goodwill (where goodwill is shown on the balance sheet)" and the value of any shares held. Both of those are difficult to quantify and are forever changing significantly.

In summary, in my own case in the current economic downturn I may be just below the cut-off for 2008/09 income but cannot reliably predict next year's income. However, even if I overcome that, calculating the value of "assessable assets" in the current climate is almost impossible. Without the advice of an accountant I don't believe I can calculate whether I am eligible or, if I am, what the value of the YA would be.

The response from Ms Gillard's advisers also ignores the fact that some rural/regional students were able to obtain Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships which are approximately double the value of the new StartUp Scholarships. Comparing benefits under the old and new rules is not entirely valid because there is no way of knowing if the student would have qualified for a CAS under the current rules.

Regards,

Tony

P.S. I'd like to float a possible (though possibly radical) alternative. The remaining "independent" criterion of 30 hours work for 18 months still does not, in my view, in any way demonstrate independence, certainly not after the employment ceases and studies commence. The current independent income test requires approx \$19,500 income over 18 months which also, in my view, is insufficient to demonstrate "independence" but would be a good quantum of annual income to adopt as sufficient to live on independently. Why can't it be that to demonstrate ongoing independence, a student be required to make up the difference between the YA they receive and the amount of

\$19,500 per year? YA at the away from home rate is about \$9,600 per year so they would be required to earn approx. \$10,000pa. The incentive would be to work to get the YA not just sit back and accept it once qualified and that could only be a good thing. Most current gap year kids are aiming to earn their \$19,500 before Uni starts so they would not be disadvantaged by this. Not sure what the total \$ cost would be compared to the Govt proposal - the numbers would have to be crunched

**Sent:** Saturday, 23 May 2009 9:37 PM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** Proposed changes to Youth Allowance

To the Honourable Robert Oakeshott,

I, Andrew Sylvester (member of Lyne electorate), am writing in response to the proposed federal Budget concerning the changes to Youth Allowance. These changes make it almost impossible for rural students, like myself, from the electorate to be able to afford to study at university, let alone even think about being able to stay at a college on campus. To be able to afford a place to rent in Sydney most people are looking at a minimum \$200 a week in rent, which may not even include water, electricity, phone line or internet, or even food to survive, let alone thrive in a learning environment. I took the allowed 12 month deferment of my studies to earn the money to become financially independent from my parents as their middle income wage disqualified me from receiving youth allowance payments. I found it very difficult to acquire work for the first 6 months after completing my HSC but was lucky enough to work for the following 10 months to earn the required amount to qualify. I fear that those young people in your electorate and throughout Australia whom have also deferred enrolment for this year, and those in the years to come, will fail to qualify for this much needed social security payment and thus be unable to further their education to reach their potential. I hope that you will oppose these changes to the Youth Allowance system in place so as to allow the young people of Lyne and Australia, Australia's future leaders, access to a fair tertiary education system.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Sylvester



Sent: Tuesday, 26 May 2009 10:46 PM  
To: Titterington, Jane (R. Oakeshott, MP)  
Subject: Re: RE: youth allowance

Dear Rob

I would like to make known my opposition to the proposed changes to youth allowance for independent students as laid out in the 2009 budget. I believe these proposed changes are unfair on at least 2 accounts. Students who completed their HSC last year and who are currently working in their gap year to become financially independent so that they could attend university next year, did so in good faith. One of the requirements for independence has always been to earn a specific amount of money within an 18month period. Changing the rules halfway through that 18 month period is grossly unfair and leaves them "out in the cold" so to speak.

Secondly, for anyone who has lived in a regional area and who has had to relocate to metropolitan areas for study, would be aware of the financial cost that is imposed on families. Rent, bond, books, food, and utilities are very expensive for students who do not have the opportunity to live at home and study. This cost then must be borne by their family over and above those same expenses that they already pay to run the family household.

This is a particular discrimination against regional students and will in fact lead to many being denied an opportunity to further study because their parents income may be above the means tested allowance but who can not afford the weekly ongoing costs for their children to live away from home. Often families have 2 or more children attending university simultaneously.

Even if students were permitted by universities to defer for 2 years to allow them to fulfill the new criteria of working for 18 months of 2 years for 30 hours a week, it is often very difficult to obtain consistent full time work in regional areas, particularly in the current economic climate.

If the education revolution is in fact about having a more skilled and educated society then these changes will certainly not assist in making such goals happen. I urge you to consider the impact of these proposed changes and lobby that these changes do not pass in their current form.

Yours sincerely  
Colleen McQueen

**Sent:** Wednesday, 27 May 2009 2:53 PM

**To:** Brown, Bob (Senator); Xenophon, Nick (Senator); Fielding, Steve (Senator); Oakeshott, Robert (MP); Ellis, Kate (MP); Gillard, Julia (MP); info@usu.usyd.edu.au; sa.admin@anu.edu.au; EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au; Truss, Warren (MP); oxley@parliament.nsw.gov.au; Pyne, Chris (MP); Mirabella, Sophie (MP)

**Subject:** Youth Allowance revamp

**Please can you help? My son has just wasted 2 years of his life working for something he now cannot have!**

The new federal budget includes a range of changes to the Youth Allowance System, under the guise of 'Making the System Fairer', however what these changes fail to take into account is the marginalisation of middle Australia, **particularly those from rural and regional areas**, who incur substantial costs in moving to the city to further their education. The changes make it much more difficult to qualify as financially independent, and therefore receive Youth Allowance.

Andrew Trouson in The Australian last week explained it in simple terms:

*'Students have previously been able to prove their independence by working part-time for at least 15 hours a week for two years, or earning at least \$19,500 in an 18-month period. Under the new criteria announced in the budget, students will instead have to work for a minimum of 30 hours a week for AT LEAST 18 months in any two-year period.'*

Those students who have already taken a gap year and calculated their earnings to satisfy the previous criteria of \$19 532 in 18 months have had the rules changed halfway through the game. This is effectively retrospective legislation, as those who have already undertaken gap years and deferred their education don't have the option of changing this decision, and most cannot opt to gain full-time employment (even if full-time jobs could be found for the thousands of young people affected by these changes) and take another year off, as this would forfeit their accepted places at university.

The existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship (worth \$4324 per annum) has been replaced with a diminished '**Relocation Scholarship**', which is only worth **\$4000 in the first year, and \$1000 in subsequent years, and is also dependent on being in receipt of Youth Allowance in the first place**. Obviously, the university/your landlord doesn't reduce your rent just because you've been living there for a year. Making it harder for young people to go to university won't assist our economy either now, or in the future.

**Can somebody please tell me where all the youth (particularly in the country) are supposed to find jobs of 30 hours per week or more, when our unemployment rate is rising, the economic crisis has strangled the economy, we are in our worst ever drought in the Wimmera Wheatbelt, and older employees are not allowed to retire til an older age under the new budget so therefore will be holding onto their jobs for longer? Beats me!!**

This new concept is **not fair at all on country kids** who face expenses of \$10,000 - \$13,000 pa just to have a roof over their heads in the city to be able to go to uni in the first place, let alone there are thousands of kids out there who've worked hard for the last one or two years to enable themselves to qualify for youth allowance, to ease the burden on their already struggling families - all now rather fruitless and just **a sheer waste of effort at year 12 along with up to 2 years basically wasted in a totally irrelevant job!**

Not what I'd call a fairer system or giving our youth a fair go!

PS: My own son worked his gut out at college in 2007 to get an excellent enter score to qualify for his course. Because of financial constraints he could not attend in 2008 so he deferred. Even though he could not defer his attendance another year, he was told he could re-apply for 2010 and his ENTER score would be 'taken into account' even though he would be applying as a mature age student this time. So he has worked another year to save funds to help us out, and to ensure he qualified for Youth Allowance.

**What has he got now? 2 years of 'piffle' on his Resume** to justify his time spent since finishing High School – and limited prospects of EVER being able to attend university.

**So we're back to the days when I was young – only the rich go to uni. Sad – there goes a much needed Criminologist!** Thank you Mr Rudd and your government! Wish I'd never voted for you....

**Sent:** Thursday, 28 May 2009 10:42 AM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** Youth Allowance Changes

Dear Rob,

On examination of the new proposed criteria for Youth Allowance we realise that our son will be ineligible. As mentioned in our previous email to you (copy included below), he met all the existing criteria and has raised over the required \$19000 before heading overseas last week to do volunteer work. Our son will now find it impossible to meet the new requirements if legislated and thus will not be able to start his law degree in 2010. He will have to try and find employment on his return and work for a further 18 months in order to qualify for Youth Allowance. As his degree can not be started mid year, it will mean him taking a further two years before University entry.

Such retrospective legislation will disadvantage so many of our young achievers. We will have thousands who have worked hard academically in order to gain University entrance becoming disillusioned and discouraged, and being forced into an already 'ailing' job market'. Many will forgo University which may lead in future years to a shortage of young professionals. Instead of an 'educational revolution' it will become an 'educational disaster' for many students and their families.

Yours Sincerely,  
Ken and Sally Davidson

HI,

Re. Proposed changes to youth allowance

As concerned parents we would like to express our disgust at the proposed changes to the youth allowance which will affect our son Matthew, presently in his gap year and our other children in the future who are presently in years 11 and 8.

Matthew has a deferred place at UNSW for 2010 which could now be in jeopardy due to the proposed changes. He has been working full-time in one job and all weekend in a second job to ensure he met

the criteria for the youth allowance -criteria which he will not meet if the changes go ahead.

How is it some

young people can be paid the dole and yet our future most promising students, OUR FUTURE LEADERS, will get no aid to help them gain the degrees and qualifications they need for their chosen careers.

UNIVERSITY ACCESS and FURTHER EDUCATION MUST BE ACCESSABLE TO ALL regardless of background or financial status. Why should we encourage our children to achieve the best grades possible if when they achieve this there is no further ladder to climb due to financial constraints.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AGAINST THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE YOUTH ALLOWANCE. THIS SUPPORT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!!

Yours faithfully  
Gary and Beverley Sherratt

01/06/09

To: The elected representatives and leaders of our great country.

Re; Youth allowance

I attended a rally in Port Macquarie yesterday the 31<sup>st</sup> of May to show support to the young people that have been affected by the retrospective introduction of the latest budget.

My daughter made the decision, much to my relief, to have a "gap year" and defer for a year after being accepted by Armadale's UNE.

This budget has given her the distinct feeling she has now wasted a year, even though her decision making was based on the situation at the time.

The message sent by the government is they will do what they like and not be concerned by the effect it has on a relatively small number of students and their struggling families.

Our government appears more interested in its international presence than value adding our own precious resource that is our children, who are the future of Australia.

Our government appears more interested in buying votes from the population of Australia with it's over spending stimulus packages than providing an affordable education for our young Australians.

Our government appears more interested in encouraging immigrants to attempt to enter Australia illegally, at great expense to us the tax payer, than create an educated workforce from the people they claim to represent.

Our government appears more interested in flying to Singapore to present a speech then fly straight back (last Friday), which could be presented via the electronic communications available. How many degrees could that one extravagance have paid for?

Our government appears to be encouraging an increase in the birth rate with baby bonuses and paid maternity leave.

We have been told for years our children are our future, a statement I completely agree with.

Does the government have any intention of providing the opportunity, for that generation of young Australians, to receive tertiary education?

I ask you to make sure this decision is reversed or not implemented, no just for the present intake of student's but for the future students that will offer more to Australia than short term stimulus packages could ever do.

Yours

Iain Maclean

Sent: Sunday, 31 May 2009 10:31 PM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
Subject: Independent Student Allowance

Hi Robert,  
Please do all you can to make rural students who have to live away from home able to get Youth Allowance so they can have a chance to get a decent education.

I have two intelligent daughters and will have enormous trouble supporting them both at University at the same time. I am a teacher and will have to take out a second mortgage if there is not a change. I am close to retirement so this will impact on my superannuation in a big way. The majority of people in this area not able to do this for their kids.

This has been put in to make it hard for city rich to rip off the system, but it is having a very big impact on country kids. I know this will impact on the aspirations of many talented kids in my school and believe that this is not in the best long term interest of our countries future.

Please help where you can.

Desperate to get through this idea to the leaders in Canberra.

Thanks  
Ian Kerr

**Sent:** Sunday, 31 May 2009 8:17 PM

**To:** Brown, Bob (Senator); Xenophon, Nick (Senator); Fielding, Steve (Senator); Oakeshott, Robert (MP); Ellis, Kate (MP); Gillard, Julia (MP); info@usu.usyd.edu.au; sa.admin@anu.edu.au; enquirycentre@newcastle.edu.au; Truss, Warren (MP); oxley@parliament.nsw.gov.au; Pyne, Chris (MP); Mirabella, Sophie (MP)

**Subject:** youth allowance!

For many people in places like the Hastings Valley NSW, in a rural area, we live with our parents or guardians until we finish school. During that time, either our parents work and pay our rent, own the houses we live in, or get Centrelink payments to help get by. My father is disabled, my mother a carer. I am on Centrelink payments. I work part time at McDonalds, like many youths, and I am part way through my HSC year. I have had to take a number of days off school through out the last 3 terms due to illness which I can not avoid. Yet I am a great student, and a fantastic leader, and ALWAYS try my hardest, there is a programme called the early entry scheme, offered by some universities who understand that sometimes it's not always possible to achieve the UAI necessary to gain a place in the course we want.. if offered a place in early entry, we can choose to differ.. but if we have to "have to work for a minimum of 30 hours a week for AT LEAST 18 months in any two-year period." how are we supposed to get into university if offered this opportunity when we don't have the money needed to live... there are a number of courses that are not offered anywhere near where I live, so what happens to my peers who get offered what they've just worked their hardest for the last 2 years of their school life, but can't follow through with it as the Centrelink payments offered to people in situations alike to mine, allow for us to pay rent and eat. They don't offer much more in the way of a university student, but it allows for us to gain a degree and LIVE. and if our parents are

only earning enough to get them selves and the other siblings in their family by from day to day, how are they suppose to help us live, and i can guarantee that it is NOT possible to earn the 300\$ a week needed working in a job like mcdonalds or coles and still study. the government is constantly saying how we need more teachers!

we need to further our education!

we don't want people to be bludging off doll payments, and with more and more people being un employed, it's hard enough to find a job offering 17, 18 and 19 year olds 30 hour week jobs, when there's 25, 26 and 27 year olds who have been through university going for the same job.

it appears to not only myself that when the government makes these decisions, they are not considering the fact that the HSC year is hard enough and puts so much stress on so many people, and that NOW, when we get to the end of it all, its even harder to get in to the positions that we want, because more and more restrictions are being put in place.

it's all a big contradiction, and it makes it more stressful for us as students knowing that even when we get through this year.

It's not good enough.

what is it going to be next?

the government under Rudd has made some decisions in the way of pensioners and older citizens that are great, but what about for us students. and the ones who are really working hard to go to university or further education. who haven't just dropped out at the end of year 10.

it seems that you still haven't considered the fact that we have so much pressure put on us already and when we rise to the occasion and go head on to the challenges that the restrictions of things like money and the never ending rules have put on us.

it's still not good enough.

so i ask you again.

what is going to be next...

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**Sent:** Friday, 29 May 2009 2:41 PM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** Michelle Ryan-hard worker, independant with ambition

Hi!

My name is Michelle Ryan and i live on the North Coast NSW, yes in a rural area. The purpose of this email here is to tell you my situation and what would happen if the new criteria to get youth allowance became official. In my community about 200 students went through year 12. There is one highschool in the Lower Clarence, otherwise kids are bussed off to grafton to a private school if their parents prefer. Most stayed home obviously to get a job and have a gap year off. There seems to be a pattern where the new lot of students who stay home each year hand in resumes as soon as they finish

their HSC in hope that they will get the position in a local business spot that belonged to a past "gap year/working year student". Usually it works out that there are just enough jobs available, so its been okay in this area. What will happen if we have to stay home another 6 months? There won't be any jobs for next years students who want to stay home. I've considered what i would do if the new rules came out. I am working for a fruit and vegetable shop and only got my hours because one of the staff members became sick. They promised to give her the job back when i went to uni next year. I won't have that extra 6 months work available. I would probably move away and try and find 30 hours a week work for 6 months and then try to start somewhere in the second semester. I would love to got to a conservatorium to do a bachelor of music/teaching. I've been excepted into Newcastle and Sydney. The only other conservatorium close enough is Brisbane. NONE of these will start my course second semester, so now i am starting to wonder whether to take another year off, or to do some subjects in a bachelor of music course semester 2 and transfer in 2011, crediting the subjects towards a teachers course. My mother is helping me learn to live independantly. I pay 60 dollars board a week, which is nothing compared to what i would have to pay in Sydney or Brisbane. If i do have to work for half a year away from home, i'll have to pay rent won't i, without any youth allowance. That i could do, but i just feel that its such a waste of time. I really wanted to audition for the chamber choir at the Sydney Conservatorium, as they are touring Europe next year. Now that oppportunity would be eliminated. I started an AMEB Amus exam (vocal diploma exam after 8th is completed) and decided to give it up as i was travelling 4 hours to the Gold Coast so that i would have the tuition needed. The cost was becoming too much. My plan was to do it through the conservatorium while there are ready available, excellent tutors who would not be 4 hours away from where i would be living. I am not wanting more money or a scholarship. i have had alot of work experience and feel very independant. I just wish it could stay the way it is now. i don't think there needs to be a change. I don't feel they need to give out more money to students who will just spend it getting trashed on the weekends and can't be bothered to work to earn the extra amount they need. Just leave it the way it is and i won't have to have this on my mind constantly until January, giving me two months then to sort out what i will do.

Thankyou for your time.

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**Sent:** Wednesday, 3 June 2009 9:46 AM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** Youth allowance.

***Dear Member of Parliament,***

***I am writing to seek your help in altering part of the proposed changes to legislation about students already working***

***for twelve months as a criteria to be able to receive government assistance when starting their university education.***



***As you are aware, this change affects last year's HSC achievers and would mean they will have to work until the middle of next year to meet the new guidelines. Having already deferred their entrance to university by twelve months to meet the rules under the old system, the new rules will preclude them from taking up their studies when required, early next year, thereby missing their chance to enter the university as promised.***

***Please vote to amend this unfair legislation and to have the new rules re employment to apply from 2010 and not retrospective to 2009.***

***Yours sincerely, Norma Baker.***

Dear Rob,

Another aspect I find puzzling is the alleged savings from the proposed independence changes. The Govt states that under the proposals 30,700 potential new YA recipients will not qualify as independent and 3,600 more will not receive a higher benefit. The 3,600 can only be current dependent at home students who may qualify as independent from the start of next year having passed one of the tests. I don't know if you have looked at this but under the current rules those 30,700 will ONLY qualify for YA payments from sometime in May next year (18 months after leaving school). At most that is 4 x fortnightly payments in Y2009/10 which at the maximum rate of \$371.40 (away from home rate) = \$45.6M. According to the Bradley Review about 30% of independent students live at home so it would actually be less than that. The 3,600 others would possibly get increased payments for the full six months and the increase would be between \$127.00 and \$371.40 per fortnight (depending on their current level of YA as dependents). Even at an average increase of \$300/fn that is only \$14M for the period Jan-June 2010 (and most would not start the higher payments in January so the total would be less). So the possible worst case for Y2009/10 is only \$45.6M + \$14M or about \$60M total yet the Govt claims savings of \$132.7M in Y2009/10. Similarly, for later years it is claimed to save at least \$552M/year. Even if all the 33,700 students who are to be denied independent YA under the current proposals were receiving the maximum "away from home" YA it only equates to \$331M/year. However, I also think the savings should be cumulative so over four years it is probably about the total claimed.

Of course, this is a two-edged sword - if the savings are less then there is a hole in the budget to fund other measures even if they do implement the changes.

Perhaps I have something totally wrong here but if you haven't looked at this it may be worth a bit of investigation.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Tony Green

I am writing you to express my concern in relation to the changes to Youth Allowance.

My daughter is currently completing her HSC at MacKillop Senior College and planning to attend University to undertake a Bachelor of Teaching / Arts at Newcastle Uni or UNE Armidale.

My husband is a self employed Electrical Contractor and I work part-time as the Children's Services Director for the Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre Children's Services, which enables us to make ends meet but certainly not lead an extravagant lifestyle. Again we find ourselves disadvantaged by working hard to support our family, as Sophie will not qualify for any assistance for University based on us being a two income family.

At the beginning of the year – Sophie applied for a GAP year in England and was offered several positions in UK schools, she has accepted a placement at Abberley Hall commencing in January 2010. She has been planning this trip and saving for several years. The decision to take a GAP year was not taken lightly and one of the major contributors to the decision being made was the fact that she would be able to apply for financial independence on her return from the UK to assist her with living expenses whilst at University. This option will now be taken away and her GAP year, whilst a fantastic opportunity and experience will not assist her in anyway to complete her University studies.

Why do families who are trying to do the right thing get disadvantaged by Government decisions?  
And why do kids who live in the country have to meet the same criteria as kids who live in the city?  
They have the option to live at home and go to University, while our kids have to move away and support themselves to complete their University studies.

I hope that you will do whatever you can to help stop these changes and give our kids a fair go.

Sincerely, Dimity & Tony Miller

To Mr. Oakeshott,

My name is Jessica Hardy. I am eighteen years old and have recently finished my HSC year in 2008. In late 2008 my careers advisor gave me options as to where I might head into the future, those being; to either enter full time employment, go to university or take a gap year. As I have undertaken a bachelor of arts/teaching at the University of New England, the later two options appealed to me. I researched and made the decision to undertake a gap year before going on to do my tertiary studies. I felt I would like to gain valuable experience in the workforce, but mostly I was driven to achieve the bar of \$19,500, so that when I entered university I could apply for the fundamental financial support. However, with the recent policy changes to alter the criteria in which to be eligible for youth allowance, this has put my future tertiary studies in peril.

Mr. Oakeshott, I am employed at my local McDonald's restaurant, which I have been working at since I was fifteen years of age. I decided to enter full time employment at McDonald's as it gave me great work experience and insight into the working industry, but mostly because I had the full backing of the management team that they would help me achieve my goal of \$19,500, so I may be eligible for youth allowance. As I am currently in the middle of the year, I am on target to meet the bar. However, what the Government needs to understand is McDonald's does not give me a set number of hours a week. Sometimes I work 38 hour weeks, or sometimes I only work 25 hour weeks. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve a set 30 hours a week. Not to mention if I become ill and have to miss work. It is not my decision or in my power to dictate the number of hours I am given. And in the current economic crisis, finding a second job to ensure I met the maximum 30 hour week plan, is proving difficult, as my local businesses are not employing. This Mr. Oakeshott, I believe is not only my pain and struggle, but it is the pain and struggle that thousands of other gap year students are facing.

Mr. Oakeshott, university is a life changing experience. As young adults we move away from our families and homes, hence our comfort zones. With this sudden shock into the real world we must hence delve into our studies, learn to balance a hard work ethic, but also find a stable social network. With all these adversities to overcome, we do not need to add financial burdens to this list. Also it is worth recognising the financial struggle faced by rural and regional students. I am talking about the fact that this particular demographic must travel further away from home and hence these students have no means of financial support from their families. Mr. Oakeshott, we should be encouraging people to go to university, not the other way around. For the continual running of Australia we need its people to go to university and become the doctors, nurses, teachers, barristers and engineers etc. of Australia's future. Hence, by putting more financial stress on university

students, you are deterring people from going to university and hence under resourcing Australia in the long term.

Mr. Oakeshott, I understand fully the current financial crisis that we have entered and that the Government wishes to ease the financial strain felt by the Australian people by finding ways to save money. If this plan must be implemented by the Government, may it be imposed next year in 2010, so that the students who have chosen to have a gap year this year are not negatively affected by this change. In implementing this policy in 2010 students undertaking tertiary studies next year can see the options available and hence make a more informed choice. I believe, Mr. Oakeshott, that the Government would be unjustly treating gap year students of 2009 by implementing this policy as soon as possible, as we had no prior knowledge the change, and hence may have chosen our situations differently last year when it came time to chose our future path.

This new policy could have a detrimental affect on this year's university gap year students, hence negatively impacting occupations in the long term. I beg you, Mr. Oakeshott, to really think about the consequences this policy could have on my future and of my generation's future.

Yours sincerely,

Jessica Hardy

**Sent:** Tuesday, 9 June 2009 5:58 PM

**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)

**Subject:** Youth Allowance

Re: Youth Allowance changes.

I am a student from a small town in NSW. I live in Port Macquarie and I attend MacKillop Senior Campus, at the end of last year I spent many hours with my mother applying for a gap year in the UK. I was ecstatic to see that I had obtained a position and would be starting in January 2010. I accepted the position so that I would be able you study my dream course at university and this was the only way that my parents and I could think of to be able to come up with the already hard to reach \$18 000 just to be classified as independent. To make a decision at the age of 17 to leave all your family, friends and life behind to meet the requirements of our Australian Government Youth Scheme was a very tough decision.

My Mother and Father earn enough money to support our family but not enough to be able to pay for my university degree. They already have one child studying at home through

southern cross university, they now are having to support a daughter on a gap year who will be coming home to start university but yet a third child who may never get the opportunity to go to university as we simply can not afford to have three children studying at university even if we are studying at home. Dad is a self employed electrician and mum is the director of Children services before and after school care.

There is a slight chance that I wont get to follow my dreams and go to university to do my Bachelor of Teaching/ Bachelor of Arts degree, is that what the Governments is trying to do? Take the rural kids dreams and aspirations to get a profession away from them? We are forever hearing from the media that there are a lack of nurses or lack of a certain profession if students going to university do not get this youth allowance than there will be no rural students getting professions as it is just to expensive and we all readily rely on that money. Sure we can apply for scholarships through our universities but the cost of our university supplies such as textbooks and stationary not to mention a new lap top to be organised and you have spent you scholarship plus 3 weeks of pay. By taking away this youth allowance it will force university students to take on 2 or more part time jobs just to pay rent and food to survive.

How is this fair??? I among other Australian year 12 students accepted gap year positions at the start of the year with high spirits that our life was starting we would go and work earn the money needed than we would get to follow our dreams and become what ever we wanted to be, than the Government sucked all our spirit out when I found out that I am only just unable to apply for the new law by \$2000 this is an outrage.

Where is the money going that was offered to the students??? Shouldn't we be investing the money into the students so they can get professions and are able to keep Australia a functioning country? Who is going to look after middle age people if we don't have the students going to university to become nurses and etc. who is going to teach the children of society if we don't have the students going to university to become teachers? who will be our Government when we only have selected metropolitan students who can afford to go to university no one will be capable to run a country as we will have no knowledge past year 12 and in some cases year 10.

I have always been told that my generation was the future for Australia so by taking the only advantage we have to be able to match the city students and go to the Universities away from home are you destroying the future of Australia?

Sophie Miller

**Sent:** Friday, 5 June 2009 11:35 AM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** FW: Youth Allowance Reforms

Dear Mr. Oakshott

Thank you for your recent letter congratulating me on my enrolment in the Federal seat of Lyne.

In response to your offer of assistance on any Federal Government Issues I may have I would like to bring to your attention the changes made to the Youth Allowance System in the Federal Budget which disadvantage current Gap year students and particularly those from rural areas.

I am a Gap year student in Port Macquarie. I graduated from Mackillop Senior college in Port Macquarie at the end of last year with band 6s in 5 subjects, a UAI of 97.25, a premier's award for all round excellence, several school based awards for academic excellence and an offer to study in the highly prestigious and competitive Medical program at the University of NSW. Despite these achievements, due to the actions of the Rudd Government I may not be able to attend university in the upcoming academic year.

As I am sure you are aware, previously students have been able to prove their independence in order to qualify for youth allowance by earning at least 75% of the maximum rate of pay, currently \$19,532, in an 18 month period after finishing school or by working part-time for at least 15 hours a week for two years. Under the revised system these criteria will be removed, leaving only the option to work 30 hours a week for a minimum 18 months. To make matters worse these changes will come into effect on the first of January 2010, meaning that myself and everyone in Australia who graduated from high school in 2008 are excluded, even though we made a decision based on the then current policy to defer our university places so we could attain youth allowance.

These reforms are completely unfair, particularly to rural students such as those in the electorate of Lyne. We face substantially higher relocation costs than students who live in the city and who do not have to relocate to attend University. I have been offered a place in medicine at UNSW in Sydney, which I deferred in order to travel and to attain youth allowance. In the understanding that I could qualify by making the 19.5 thousand I traveled overseas for several months, funded by my savings from part time jobs I had while at school. Had I known back in November when I made these decisions that earning 19.5 thousand dollars would not allow me to qualify I would have either gone straight to university, and not wasted a year or began full time work as soon as I finished the HSC. Had I done this I would only have 2 months where full time employment clashed with full time study. Not knowing this however I did not begin working full time until April of this year, making it impossible for me to prove my independence under the new criteria while also taking up my place at university. Now I face either going to University with no funding at all as my parents combined income exceeds \$42 000, or forfeiting my place in a highly competitive course.

As such, if I were to accept my place and relocate to Sydney in march 2010 I would be facing base living costs for on campus accommodation exceeding \$12 500. This is only for 35 weeks of the year and does not cover the costs of books, travel, internet, technology required for the course or and associated costs of living and studying. From this point if I were to save all of my earnings between now and the beginning of semester 1 I would just have enough to cover my first years accommodation leaving nothing for the associated costs of tertiary education and living outlined above. Participating in such a highly demanding course such as medicine will not give me much time for part time employment, let alone full time employment, and with a three year gap between beginning university and achieving independence at the revised age of 22. This will place a huge financial burden on my parents, which neither they nor I had anticipated.

If nothing is done to amend these grossly unfair changes we will witness more and more young people from rural areas not going to university at all, not being able to afford the expenses themselves or not wishing to place such a financial burden on parents who, despite earning more than the cutoff \$42000 really cannot afford the cost of sending one or in many cases several children to university.

I have heard that you have been made aware of this matter by some of my peers and that you are making steps to try to rectify this situation. For this I am most grateful and I deplore you to do as much as you possibly can to aid the students of Port Macquarie and Rural Australia.

Yours Sincerely

Annalise Bagust

2009 Gap year Student

**Changes to Youth Allowance**

I would like to express my concerns about the impact on students re the proposed changes to youth allowance if it is introduced on January 2010.

My 18 year old daughter, in good faith and making one of her most important adult decisions so far, made a well informed choice to take a "gap year" and qualify for youth allowance when she heads off to Armidale University next year. She was very keen to head off to University straight from school but deferred because of the financial burden that will be placed upon us so has worked to qualify herself as independent. The message she is being sent by the government is one that she counts for nothing-they can change the rules how and when they like.

Living in rural Australia she does not have the luxury of choosing to remain at home whilst at University unless she completes her studies as an external student which she feels she is not academically equipped to do. She feels she needs the uni environment of lectures and face to face support to successfully complete her studies. And as everyone knows we all learn in different ways. So straight away we have an accommodation bill of around \$9000 per annum before we consider any other expenses.

She, like many of her peers has spent many hours working away at a job without much interest and with unsociable hours to earn her income. There are not a lot of jobs to be had in Taree and certainly not where you can pick up full time secure work for the year. When she relocates to Armadale to commence her study I am sure she will not be able to pick up work immediately there either so the continuity of her work for the 18 month period will be interrupted plus it is completely unreasonable to consider continuing a 30 hour per week workload whilst commencing her studies. This I am sure the government have considered in their planning to cut these kids out of youth allowance so they can cut their budget.

Australia certainly is not promoting ourselves as the 'clever country' with choices like this that will very surely disadvantage potential students to the point that they just will not be able to attend as they cannot afford the education they have earned. People with Uni qualifications have a much higher earning capacity so eventually pay more tax. Please don't take this opportunity away from our rural youth because this is what the impact will be.

I ask you to make sure this decision is reversed or not implemented, not just for the present intake of student's but for the future students. Our kids are our future and better educational outcomes for them is a better future for Australia.

Please don't turn our country into a place where only the rich can afford an education.



Pauly Maclean

**Sent:** Wednesday, 3 June 2009 8:02 PM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Youth Allowance Changes.

Robert,

Below is an email that I have sent to members who appear to be behind the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance qualification rules.

Your understanding of this issue and help towards this being defeated is fantastic!

The disadvantaged "gap" year students appreciate your efforts.

These changes must be stopped.

Regards

Mike Armstrong

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Some proposed changes to qualify for Youth Allowance are extremely unfair.

1) To apply them to 2008 HSC students, who have chosen to take a "gap" year, is so unAustralian.

For these students, this legislation should not change the rules half way through.

The changes will mean that they will have to forfeit their place at tertiary education because of being unable to defer for a second year.

If this goes ahead it will show that the present Labor Government either doesn't understand, or doesn't care.

2) Country students who intend to progress to tertiary studies are already financially disadvantaged because of travel and living away from home costs.

For these prospective tertiary students, the proposed qualification rules will further rule out a substantial number of low to middle income families kids who will not be able to raise the finances required.

I urge you, and your colleagues, to reconsider these proposed changes.

Regards

Mike Armstrong

Hi again Zita,

I'm not sure if Rob is aware of this but I've noticed a couple of matters which were raised at Senate Estimates hearings on 4/6 which will affect those students who may be contemplating a second Gap Year to qualify as independent under the proposed rules. Under questioning the departmental officers advised that:

- The remaining work participation criterion will require 78 weeks work at a MINIMUM of 30 hours per week, not an AVERAGE of 30 hours per week as Julia Gillard has stated. It is quite possible to get the \$19,500 currently required by working (say) 25 hours/week @ \$15/hour for 12 months but anyone doing that will NOT be able to count any weeks <30 hours towards the proposed remaining criterion. Effectively they would have to crank up their employment to 30+ hrs/wk NOW in order to qualify in 2011.
- The proposed Relocation Scholarship does NOT apply to independent students except where personal circumstances warrant it. Having to move away from home for country students does NOT in itself qualify a student for the Relocation Scholarship.

Interestingly, the officers tried (very reluctantly) to estimate how many of the current gap year students might not qualify for ANY dependent YA. They admitted they did not know how many students were even affected by the changes (the 30,700 quoted was admitted to being a guess) let alone how many would miss out. At the end of the questioning they thought 3,000 may be the number. Minister Carr did not want any admission as to numbers and in the end dismissed anyway them by trotting out the propoganda about how many current independent recipients had parents earning over \$200,000.

With regard to previous comments on the Family Actual Means Test, I have obtained the FAMT documents from Centrelink and as feared it is quite horrendous, requiring details of ALL household spending and savings for all members of a household over two full financial years - for an application for 2010 it requires these details for 2007/08 and 2008/09 and it has to be completed each year that YA is claimed. Centrelink confirmed that it is mandatory where one or both parents is self employed, a partner in a business partnership or has an interest in a private company. It measures spending and savings rather than income although it includes income of the YA applicant and any other dependent children. In my view it will therefore result in a higher value of "means" than an applicant who can use the Parental (taxable) Income Test. Again, I have seen NO MENTION of the need for any applicants to use FAMT in any Budget Papers, Fact Sheets, media releases or in the Senate Estimates hearings, presumably because it is a current requirement and not subject to any proposed changes. Yet the Govt and departmental officers insist on pointing applicants only to the Parental Income Test and even then almost invariably cite the case of two dependent students living away from home where YA does not cut out completely until about \$139,000. For any prospective independent YA applicant who has an older sibling at Uni already, that sibling is also likely to have independent status and therefore, for next year at least, there will be very few affected families with an older dependent student so this higher limit is irrelevant to their situation.

Kind regards and keep up the good work Rob,

Tony Green

Sent: Tuesday, 26 May 2009 3:11 PM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
Subject: Feedback from your APH Web Page

Please do not respond to this email

Comments: Dear Rob,

As a parent, I wish to protest against the Rudd Government's changes to the workforce participation criteria for establishing independence under Youth Allowance by removing the following two eligibility criteria: that the recipient worked part-time for 15+ hours per week for two years or more since leaving school; and the recipient earned, in an 18-month period since leaving school, an amount equivalent to 75% of the maximum rate of pay (in 2009 this requires earnings of \$19,532). The effect of this change is that eligibility criteria for the Independent Youth Allowance will retrospectively require participants to complete 30 hours work per week over a 18/24 month period compared to earning \$19,532 over 18 months.

This means a student who has complied with the previous rules but not worked 30 hours per week will have lost the credit for their effort and must start again thus losing 2 years before commencing a University Course. These proposal further disadvantages young people whose place of residence is beyond daily commuting distance from a University and thus must fund their total accommodation costs over and above the other direct costs of such an education. That working 30 hours per week while attending University is virtually impossible in more intensive courses.

Name: Mrs Therese Glen-Holmes

**Sent:** Monday, 18 May 2009 10:17 PM  
**To:** Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
**Subject:** Budget - Youth Allowance

Dear Rob,

Up until the budget was released week my son was going to University next year. He finished high school last year and has been working two jobs since November to earn enough money to qualify for the Youth Allowance. This allowance enables country kids; we live in Port Macquarie, to be able to afford basic accommodation when they head off to University.

In the budget papers the independence test for receiving this allowance has been removed and the allowance only available if the combined income of their parents is under \$42,000. I can understand

the Government needs to make cuts in spending but this cut affects country people more than city people where kids can still live at home while attending University. If he had known of this change when he finished school last year he would probably have looked for an apprenticeship or taken up a TAFE course.

Could you please look into this issue and see if a modification can be made so that country kids are not disadvantaged. We need professionals of all kinds in the country and one way to get them is to promote local talent. We cannot do this if it is too expensive for them to leave home to study. If we only train city kids we will never have enough country based professionals.

I hope you can help.

Yours faithfully,

Derek Gillespie

Sent: Monday, 18 May 2009 8:17 PM  
To: Oakeshott, Robert (MP)  
Subject: youth allowance

Hi Rob

im aware you have seen the correspondence from the Petts and other on this issue. I have one at UNI now and two more potentially in the next few years. They have all expressed an interest in having a gap year to work but it appears with the changes they still will be unable to fund their future study and with three at UNI this will be much more difficult under the new rules for myself as for all country people when they have to move away to do their course of choice.

I hope you decide to support those of us acting to oppose these changes that increase the hardship of regional people who are generally already on lower incomes than their city equivalents.

best wishes, mel gray-thompson

#### THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND PROPOSALS ON REGIONAL COMMUNITIES.

Our main concern is that families living in regional communities will be further disadvantaged compared to families living in metropolitan areas. The new eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance at the independent rate is not realistic. It will lock out young people from many middle income earning families living in regional Australia from higher education, simply because many courses are not available locally.

It is impossible for young people to work 30 hours per week on average over a minimum of 18 months in a regional or rural areas. The jobs are just not available, especially under the current and

projected labour market conditions. While some holiday work is available for school leavers in coastal tourism dominated towns, small business cannot afford to train someone who they know or suspect will leave the area to go and study elsewhere. Similarly, larger employers, have a history of employing younger secondary age students in part-time work. The impact of the proposed measures is to force young regional people to leave home to secure employment even before they commence their studies at a cost to the regional economy and at a cost to those families.

Most university courses do not allow an 18 month deferral period, which means young people from regional and rural areas have to compete for higher education entry with HSC students 2 years younger even if they are eligible for Youth Allowance at the independent rate.

#### OUR FAMILY AS A CASE STUDY.

We have 4 four children 3 of whom were born in Port Macquarie where all 4 attended both primary and secondary local schools

We are both teachers in the public education system. As such our combined income means our children are ineligible for Youth Allowance at the dependent rate under both the proposed and current eligibility criteria.

We do congratulate the Government for making Youth Allowance more accessible to more Australian families, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, as a middle income family living in a regional NSW centre, we argue that we are financially disadvantaged by the changes in the following ways, as the table below indicates:-

1. We are significantly financially disadvantaged in comparison to families in a similar income bracket living in metropolitan areas, who have local access to higher education and therefore, whose children can live at home whilst studying.
2. The changes in the new eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance at the independent rate for our children. As PAYE income earners our children are now locked out of the Youth Allowance Scheme until they reach the age of 22.
3. Under the new scheme, it is very likely that our 2 youngest children may be forced to delay their studies by 2 years for financial reasons, which puts them 2 years behind their counter parts who do not have to leave home to study, in terms of their income earning capacity.

This submission supports our arguments that the Governments changes to the Youth Allowance eligibility criteria will create financial hardship for middle income regional families whose children are already under represented in the higher education statistics of our nation.

#### FINANCIAL IMPACT ON RURAL AND REGIONAL STUDENTS ATTENDING METROPOLITAN HIGHER EDUCATION.

Our eldest and our second child, both currently attend Sydney University . Clancy is studying Law and Ned, Engineering. Neither of these courses are offered locally. Both receive independent Youth Allowance having taken a gap year to earn the required income within an 18 month period. Both had to leave Port Macquarie to find employment to do so, even though they had a combination of full and part time local work prior to leaving. The opportunities for local employment in Port Macquarie for young people, even during an economic boom were very limited. They would not have met the eligibility requirements by staying in Port Macquarie.

Centre Link has advised us that we cannot claim them as dependents for purposes of claiming for Youth Allowance now that our third child, Milly is in her HSC year. They receive Youth Allowance as independent students yet their living costs are more than double what they receive from Centre Link annually. This means that they have had to be employed part time the entire time they have been studying. However the amount they are allowed to earn by Centrelink still falls far short of the living cost of living, despite their expenditures being minimal indeed. The Therefore we have to supplement their income in order for them to live. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that their rigorous university courses do not allow full-time students to students to dedicate many hours to casual employment to supplement their income.

**THE ADEQUACY OF GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO PROVIDE FOR STUDENTS FROM REGIONAL AREAS WHO HAVE TO LEAVE HOME FOR HIGHER EDUCATION - OUR FAMILY AS A CASE STUDY.**

Our two youngest children plan to go on to higher education within the next 3 years, which means which means we will be continuing to supplement 2 children's living costs as well as paying for our youngest two, both of whom will be locked out of Youth Allowance until they turn 22. This is an inequitable burden on our family income in comparison to our metropolitan counterparts whose adult children can live at home whilst studying.

Below, is a table of current living costs of our 2 eldest children living within walking distance of the University of Sydney:

<b>Clancy - USYD LAW</b>		<b>Ned - USYD ENGINEERING</b>	
<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
Youth Allowance \$10,920	Rent 10400	Youth Allowance \$11830	Rent 9110
Part time Tutoring in Sem 1 only \$2, 217	Food 7800	Holiday casual employment \$1500	Food 7800
TOTAL \$13,137	Medical / health 300	TOTAL \$13,330	Medical / health 200
	Text books		Text books

	2000		1000
	Sundries 520		Sundries 520
	Telephone 260		Telephone 260
	Internet 260		Internet 260
	Electricity 780		Electricity 650
	Transport 520		Transport 520
	Recreation 520		Recreation 520
	Student benefit 100		Student benefit 100
	Clothes 800		Clothes 800
	TOTAL \$24,260		TOTAL \$21740

This means that this year we will have to supplement their basic living costs by more than \$21,300. This is a conservative estimate, as this does not include costs such as the purchase of furniture, computers, white goods and rental bonds.

Our sons are obviously living below the poverty line. They are unable to afford a car or to pay any Course fees (HECS). They are also now experiencing real difficulty finding part time employment in this economic downturn. They find themselves facing a dilemma: Do they spend more time studying or do they spend more time finding part-time employment?

Milly intends to apply for a course at a Sydney university in 2010 and Daisy in 2011. As we may have 4 children studying in 2011, we estimate that the financial cost that we, as parents could confront will be in the vicinity of \$70,000 for the one year. This is more than half of our net family income.

#### OUR PROPOSAL

1. The Federal Government should retain the current eligibility criteria for any students who need to leave their family home to participate in higher education.



2. That the government identifies ways that Centrelink can more accurately target its compliance monitoring procedures so that those families whose children receive Youth Allowance whilst living at home at the independent rate are not from high income families.

3. That the base rate of Youth Allowance is increased so that students are not forced to live below the Poverty line.