

Andrea and Terry Macfarlane

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband and I have three children at home in years 12, 9 and 6. Our year 12 daughter plans to go to university and it is likely that our year 9 and year 6 sons will also.

We have lived in Manjimup for the last 17 years and are committed to continuing to contribute to this town. When our children attend university in Perth, they will need accommodation (including all household goods), food and transport. This will be an enormous strain on our family's resources as we will basically have to run two households. Our children will not have our ongoing presence to help them with daily tasks and problems and they will have the additional burden of possibly working long hours in order to support themselves. While our family will send our children to university no matter how much strain that places us under, many families will simply not be able to.

We have considered the option of allowing our daughter to postpone university further and work for an additional 6 months in order to qualify for the Youth Allowance and have decided against it for two reasons. The first is that many courses do not allow in-take in the middle of the year and this means that university could be put off for two years. Also, job opportunities for unskilled workers to work 30 hours minimum a week are limited in country towns and this will be even more so with the increased demand of other students seeking the same. Therefore we would have no guarantee that deferment would mean qualifying for the Youth Allowance.

Governments should be providing every avenue of assistance to those children in disadvantaged situations so that those who are capable and want to go to university have every opportunity to do so. This will create an inequitable situation and discourage people from living and contributing to country communities.

We urge you to review the proposed new eligibility requirements for Youth Allowance to enable equitable access to university for rural students.

Yours sincerely,
Andrea and Terry Macfarlane