

To The Senate,

In 2008 I completed VCE and decided to take a gap year before attending university in 2010. This is something which I had been planning for a couple of years and the decision was primarily motivated by my being able to attain this Government support.

I live in rural Victoria, and will have to move to Melbourne for University, which involves heavy costs that I would simply not be able to achieve without regular income, and due to my heavy course load, I will not be able to have a part-time job. Though my parents are over the income threshold, they are in absolutely no position to pay for my university education.

I currently work as a waitress on a casual basis, which means my hours of work vary greatly from week to week. Yet even if by some miracle in this economic crisis, I was able to attain full time work from the moment I left school until the moment I started university, without any time off for holidays or illness, I still would not qualify. This is disgraceful, and completely undermines the basis for taking a gap year.

The proposed changes to Youth Allowance will make it impossible for many rural students like myself to attend university. This is an enormous mistake, and clearly an oversight by the government, particularly in a time of economic stress when an education may be ones only chance of attaining a secure future.

If this were not bad enough, I think it is appalling that the government would attempt to implement the change in 2010, cutting off those students who took a gap year in the good faith that they would qualify. If they were to then take another year off in order to work 30 hours a week for 18 months, they could potentially lose their place in their university course.

If these changes are made, it will be simply impossible to achieve this support for hundreds of rural students, as the 'gap year' will become obsolete. The government is taking away their only realistic way of achieving their goal of attending university.