

22/6/2009

Dear Senator Adams

I am writing to express my dismay at the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance beginning on 1 January 2010 that were announced in the budget.

My wife and I were not recipients of the stimulus payments nor are we eligible recipients of the education rebates available to many Australians. We both work full-time to support our children and to give them what we consider the best educational opportunities available to them and in doing so forego all possible Tax benefits currently allowable under our present system. We work extremely hard and go without many taken-for-granted extras so that we can do this - we do not have a nice flat screen TV, we have not been on an overseas trip even after 25 years of being together and we have a substantial mortgage just like most Australian couples. That is our choice however, and I am sure the Tax benefit system in most cases rewards those in need more than us so I cannot begrudge that.

Tertiary education however is another matter. Perhaps if we had the luxury of living in a major city, we would be able to support our children as they endeavour to increase their knowledge and become valuable contributors to Australian society. But we do not, and the only way we can help our children achieve their aims is to support them whilst they attempt to obtain the small assistance they were eligible to receive as independent students under the old Youth Allowance scheme.

My daughter put her ambitions of qualifying as a doctor on hold to undertake 14 months of whatever work was available to enable her to partly qualify. She was determined to continue working throughout the following 12 months on a part-time and holiday basis to enable her to meet those old rules. To be now advised that she has spent this past year scraping together funds to enable her to pursue that goal to no avail is devastating. Worse still, many of the weeks she has worked in the hospitality area (the only employment opportunity she and many of her friends had) will not be considered as full weeks because of the proposed 30 hour/week ruling – it is not for a lack of wanting to work that many young adults like her cannot gain 30 hours of employment in a week. The work is just not there – particularly in the country areas but I am sure you are well aware of the employment issues amongst youth, particularly in the country. You are also no doubt aware that Universities do not allow deferment of such courses for more than 12 months so even if she was determined to try and work for another 12 months to qualify for the allowance, the ability for her to then enter University is seriously compromised given the very small intake of students into medicine.

I feel very sad for young people like my daughter who have a passion to enter a profession such as medicine – a profession we are desperately short of qualified people in – and enter it not for the sometime perceived rich rewards on offer, but for the humanitarian assistance it can provide. As I outlined to her last week, to undertake a grueling 6 year courses such as medicine means there is no opportunity to work part-time to assist her in her university education – the contact hours and study are such that there is little time left at all to consider this option. Although my wife and I have worked extremely hard to support our children through their schooling, we are unable to provide them with the financial support to attend university away from home. We can of course provide what we can, but it is way short of being enough to house, feed and clothe her in a new city dwelling.

I discussed the financial impact of undertaking medicine with my daughter last week and, in round numbers, if she undertakes such a course and incurs accommodation fees, HECS fees and loss of earnings over a 6 year period, she will be approximately \$400k behind a similar perhaps of her age who takes a position in the workforce. And this is for a profession that is so short of qualified people,

particularly in the country areas. I find it extremely difficult to fathom this logic and my recommendation was that she should consider joining the list of the unemployed and undertake volunteer work to achieve her humanitarian ambitions. She is more determined than that however and remains confident she will find a way to undertake a full-time course and find late-night hospitality employment to enable her to continue. I fear that this will lead to an inevitable dropping out of studies and a loss of a dedicated humanitarian to all of society. Sounds dramatic, but she is a person driven by the need to help other , not driven by the need for reward, and it is very sad to see that wasted.

I plead with you to please support any moves to have this component of the budget reviewed and rescinded. Not for my sake or the sake of my wife – we will continue to work hard and continue to support our children and other Australians in whatever ways we can both financially and civically. But do this for future working Australians such as my daughter who have such high hopes of giving us all a better place to live.

21/9/2009

**The Senate Committee
Rural and Regional Affairs
Rural and Regional access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities**

I attach a letter dated 22/6/09 which I forwarded to a number of Senators in relation to the proposed changes to the Tertiary Allowance rules for 2010.

Although there would appear to be a reversal of the original proposal to penalize those students currently on a 'gap' year, I believe the points I made within that letter are still pertinent for the regional students that follow those beginning their studies in 2010.

I submit this letter then as part of the Senate enquiry.