



The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Leader of the Opposition

7 July 2009

Hon Julia Gillard MP
Acting Prime Minister
Minister for Education,
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations,
Minister for Social Inclusion
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Acting Prime Minister

As you are aware, the Coalition has raised a number of concerns in relation to the Government's recent changes to youth allowance eligibility and in particular, the negative impact that the retrospectivity related to this decision will have on rural and regional students. In order to examine these concerns more closely, the Coalition has initiated a Senate inquiry and we will consider the report and any recommendations from the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee when tabled.

However, a matter has emerged that cannot wait until the Senate has dealt with this reference and it relates to the deferral date of students on a 'gap' year. On Monday, I attended a forum hosted by the Member for Forrest, Ms Nola Marino MP, where students and parents advised me that they have until 31 July to make contact with their institution and confirm that they will take up their place in 2010 or else it is forfeited. For many of the people I spoke with on Monday, they do not have the means to commence study next year and are placed in an invidious position where they took decisions based on the policy at the time and now risk their opportunity for further education.

On behalf of these families and many more affected across Australia, I ask that you urgently intervene and take up their case with Universities Australia. The Coalition believes that it is only fair that current tertiary students who have deferred their place until the start of 2010 are granted the ability to extend their deferral date by a further 12 months to enable those students who have sought to access the independent rate of youth allowance under the existing workforce participation criteria to have the ability to do so under the new rules without jeopardising their hard-won place at university.

This is an important issue and I ask that you consider this request as a matter of urgency. I am travelling in WA this week but would be pleased to discuss further. Please contact Ms Sally Cray via mobile [REDACTED] and she will arrange a suitable time.

Yours sincerely

MALCOLM TURNBULL



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Dear Minister Gillard

I held a meeting in Bunbury Monday 6 July that was attended by over 140 concerned parents and students regarding the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance.

As a result of that meeting I am writing to you to bring to your urgent attention a further issue that will be a consequence of the proposed Youth Allowance changes. It relates to the deferral date of students who are currently on their 'gap' year. Parents and students have up until 31 July to confirm with the appropriate institution that they will take up the offered place in 2010, other wise it is forfeited. Many at the meeting were not in a position to take up a university place next year because they made decisions based on the current 'rules' relating to the Youth Allowance and simply will not be able to afford university without the allowance.

I urge you to reconsider the changes relating to deferral dates so that those students and parents caught in the current 'gap' year are not disadvantaged unfairly by losing university places.

This is a very important issue for parents and students in rural and regional Australia and requires your urgent attention. I respectfully request your serious consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nola Marino'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nola Marino MP
Federal Member for Forrest