

# MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon **David Hawker** MP  
Federal Member for Wannon



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## CANBERRA CALLING

The Senate Inquiry into the Government's flawed Youth Allowance heard this week at its public hearings that Labor's changes will unfairly discriminate against students in rural and regional areas – confirming concerns that the Coalition has been raising for several months.

Hundreds of local students and parents are distraught over the Rudd Government's decision to make retrospective changes to Youth Allowance, meaning that over 20,000 students nationally who are currently undertaking their gap year are set not to receive Youth Allowance in 2010.

This week, Universities Australia spokesman David Battersby confirmed that this will hurt country students: "Universities Australia does note that students in rural and remote areas may be disproportionately affected by some aspects of the proposed changes," he said.

This comes on top of criticism of Minister Gillard's changes by the Victorian Parliament's Labor-dominated Education Committee, which said: "the Committee believes that the removal of the main workforce participation route will have a disastrous effect on young people in rural and regional areas..." and that the changes "... will have a detrimental impact on many students who deferred their studies during 2009 in order to work and earn sufficient money to be eligible for Youth Allowance."

This week's evidence provides yet further confirmation of the point that the Coalition has been making since the Budget: Labor's changes will suffocate many local students' dreams of a higher education.

Labor has already backflipped once to reprieve an estimated 5,000 gap year students in 2010.

It is time for them to swallow their pride, admit their scheme is flawed, and start discussing the Coalition's proposed amendments to improve Youth Allowance for all students.

If these changes affect you or someone you know please contact my office and add your voice to the mounting concern for our rural and regional youth.

ENDS -

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