

MEDIA RELEASE



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



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INQUIRY HEARS YOUTH ALLOWANCE CHANGES WILL HURT LOCAL YOUTH

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

"Hundreds of local students and parents are distraught over the Labor 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," Mr Hawker said.

Yesterday, 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."

"Today'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," Mr Hawker said.

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

"It is now time for her to swallow her pride, admit that her scheme is flawed, and start discussing the Coalition's proposed amendments to improve Youth Allowance for all students," he said.

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