

MEDIA RELEASE



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



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GOVERNMENT SHUTS DOWN DEBATE ON YOUTH ALLOWANCE FOR RURAL KIDS

The Rudd Government has shut down a debate in Federal Parliament about its controversial Youth Allowance that will leave thousands of students in Western Victoria without the chance of attending University.

“The Government had a chance to come out and defend their policy, but instead shut down the debate. They’re refusing to negotiate, and do what is right for young people in Western Victoria,” Mr Hawker said.

“This is particularly outrageous for Darren Cheeseman, the Member for Corangamite, who voted to shut down debate on this important issue that is going to hurt thousands of his own young constituents.

“This Government seems to only care what happens to city kids. Julia Gillard is a part-time Education Minister who sat in Parliament without even having the guts to defend her own policy, despite having met with local students on Monday and hearing first-hand how this decision will crush their dreams of a tertiary education,” Mr Hawker said.

“This Government is destroying the higher education dreams of tens of thousands of young Australians in rural and regional Australia. My office has been inundated with calls and concerns from local young people who have effectively been left high and dry.

“These students don’t have the option, as city students do, of staying at home while attending University. By shutting down the ‘gap year’ provision to gain Youth Allowance, the Government is in many cases removing access altogether.

“It is tremendously disappointing that country Labor MPs voted to shut down debate on this issue that affects so many of their constituents.

“But the weakest link of all is Julia Gillard. A Minister who was too weak and ashamed to defend her own policy in Parliament,” Mr Hawker said.

“I urge all young people in Western Victoria to contact my office, or add their concerns to the Coalition’s website www.educationforaustralia.com.au so we can make sure these Government members are held to account.”

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Media contact: Jane Templeton (02) 6277 4118

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

Hamilton Office 190 Gray St, HAMILTON VIC 3300 **Warrnambool Office** 73 Kepler St WARRNAMBOOL VIC 3280

Freecall 1300 131 692 **E** David.Hawker.MP@aph.gov.au **W** www.davidhawker.com.au