

CENTRELINK CHANGE FACT SHEET

Numerous changes to the receipt of Youth Allowance were announced in the May budget which will have an impact on how to qualify for the payment as an independent student.

From January 2010 the following changes will apply:

- Students must have **worked 30+ hours per week for at least 18 months in any 2-year period** to qualify for independence. *Currently, independent students must prove that they have earned income of up to \$19,532 over an 18-month period. There are other categories for independence.*
- The age of independence will be lowered from 25 to 24 years old.
- The parental income threshold will be raised from \$32,800 p.a. to \$42,559 p.a.
- All students receiving Youth Allowance or Austudy will receive an education start-up scholarship of \$2,254 which will be paid in 2 instalments. This Student Start-Up scholarship will be indexed after 2010 and will replace the current Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship (CECS). All existing CECS students will continue to receive scholarships under current arrangements.
- All students who are eligible for independent AND dependent Youth Allowance and have to relocate from regional areas to study will receive a \$4,000 scholarship in the year of the move and \$1,000 for each subsequent year of study and will be indexed; it will replace the current Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (CAS). All existing CAS students will continue to receive scholarships under current arrangements.
- All merit and equity based scholarships up to the value of \$6,622 p.a. will become exempt from means-testing.
- Students undertaking Study Abroad will no longer have to pay the 20% loan fee on OS-HELP loans.

From January 2011, the following changes will apply:

- The age of independence will be lowered from 24 to 23 years old.
- Students can earn up to \$400 per fortnight before their Youth Allowance/Austudy payments are affected (this is currently \$236 per fortnight).

From January 2012, the following changes will apply:

- The age of independence will be lowered from 23 to 22 years old.
- All masters coursework degrees will become approved courses for the receipt of Youth Allowance/Austudy. Currently, only courses resulting in a professional qualification OR achieving a qualification in the fastest time in the absence of an undergraduate degree are eligible for Centrelink funding.

It is also proposed to increase the amount of Australian Postgraduate Award stipend to \$22,500 per annum.

Note that any student who has already received independent status for Youth Allowance under Centrelink will not be subject to the new proof of independence conditions.

For further information, download 'Transforming Australia's Higher Education System' (see pages 35-38), via http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/PDF/Additional%20Report%20-%20Transforming%20Aus%20Higher%20ED_webaw.pdf

Please see the EWOs at Student Care if you need advice about Centrelink.

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