



## Sid Sidebottom MP ... for a fair go in Braddon

**Media Release**

**August 26, 2009**

### **Sid successful in bid to assist North West gap year students' claim Youth Allowance**

Federal Member for Braddon Sid Sidebottom has welcomed the decision by Education Minister Julia Gillard to delay Youth Allowance (independence) provision changes in the case of students currently undertaking a gap year.

The changes will mean students who left school in 2008, have taken a gap year this year and who must leave home to attend university will now be entitled to apply for independent status under the existing system.

"I am delighted by this decision, which will come as a great relief to many students and their families on the North-West Coast," Mr Sidebottom said.

"In a nutshell, this decision means that current gap year students will not be caught up in the transition between the old and new system.

"I have made no secret of my concern about this particular change –I met with many worried students and their families who believed the change would leave them in limbo.

"I have met with Minister Gillard on a number of occasions to ask her to delay the introduction of these changes so that current gap year students can commence their university studies in 2010 as planned.

Mr Sidebottom, along with 18-year-old Wynyard gap year student Alan Nicholas attended a Roundtable discussion with the Minister in Parliament House on Monday.

"I'm really pleased she has listened to the needs of our students.

Mr Sidebottom said that to pay for this change, the alterations to the amount a student can earn before affecting their youth allowance will be deferred by 18 months. Students are currently able to earn \$236 a fortnight before their Youth Allowance payment is affected. This will now rise to \$400 a fortnight on July 1, 2012.

Students who have to move to study may also be eligible to receive \$4000 in their first year and \$1000 each subsequent year in a new Relocation Scholarship scheme. This means that these students will receive \$6,254 in the first year of study and \$3,254 in subsequent years in scholarships alone.

Parents with two students living away from home will also be able to earn up to \$140,729 a year before benefits are cut off under the new system, instead of less than \$80,000 a year under the existing arrangements.

Mr Sidebottom said that these parental income test changes will mean that many North-West Coast students will no longer have to claim independence from their families and be forced to take a gap year to be eligible for Youth Allowance.

Under the Rudd Government changes 68,000 students who would have been excluded previously will now receive Youth Allowance, and 35,000 will get higher payments as parental income tests are lowered, the age of independence is lowered thousands more scholarships are offered.

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