

Good morning everyone.

My name is Amity, I am a single parent and I have a daughter who has just turned three. I am currently studying for a BA in Education specialising in Special Needs.

I was disappointed when I called Centrelink halfway through last year to find out that the JET payments that were once available to any single parent studying full time, had in fact been restricted to those studying a course of 12 months duration or less. I felt like I was being penalized for pursuing a course of study that would enable me to have a decent career. My long term commitment is to get off Parenting Payments altogether and support myself and my daughter, but what incentive does the Government offer to help me achieve my goal to be independent of financial support? Not alot.

It seems obvious that the Government is more interested in short term solutions to unemployment and positive statistics rather than supporting those who choose to enter professions requiring higher levels of skills and qualifications.

The way I see it is by offering JET payments only to those who are studying short term courses, there is a higher turnover to those completing their courses and they enter the workforce at a much higher rate. This way the Federal Government can consistently show positive statistics in relation to the funds (ie JET) that it is pumping into unemployment and can say that it is doing its job.

The decision to restrict JET payments is grossly short sighted and will only perpetuate the unemployment dilemma in the long term. 12 month courses and Certificate 3 or 4 courses only enable people to enter jobs at a base level and don't really give them opportunities for advancement at higher levels within that field of work, if a prerequisite for advancement is a higher level of qualification.

The Government should also be supporting those who want to enter into occupations which require a degree.

JET payments should be available for all single parents who are studying. Why should I be discriminated against because it is going to take a little longer to reach the workforce?

This is hypocrisy at its best, at a time when fields such as teaching are suffering from a shortage of qualified personnel; surely a balanced long term view would be to encourage, by any means available, those who choose to enter the profession. To this end, JET payments would go a long way to encouraging single parents to enter the professions so desperately in need of qualified practitioners, by giving them much needed financial assistance to ensure they can afford the high cost of professional care for their children, thus enabling them to complete their course of study.

Even after receiving the 100% child care rebate, my daughters Day Care fees use up 40% of my parenting pension. To make matters worse is the fact I can't earn more than \$70.00 a week without my parenting payments being significantly reduced. For every dollar I earn above that initial \$70, Centrelink deducts nearly 0.50c from every dollar I have earned out of my parenting payment. Effectively, I can't even earn more money to alleviate the child care costs while I am studying. My rent uses up another 50%, leaving me with the remaining 10% to buy food and petrol which simply is not enough. I use my daughter's child support money to pay bills and insurances. I am constantly receiving dishonour fees from my bank because my account never has enough money in it. It is such a frustrating experience, I cannot stress this enough.

In conclusion , I would like to reiterate, that if the Federal Government were truly committed to assisting single parents to enter the workforce, the level of qualification required, be it Certificate 4 or a degree would not be an issue. The JET payment for courses longer than 12 months in duration should never have been revoked.