

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to ask you to reconsider repealing the school kids bonus.

At the very least, please allow it for people who are on disability pensions and/or low incomes.

I am on a disability pension, and my childrens' father and ex-husband does not pay child support. Supposedly he lives on no income, even though he boasts on Facebook (with photos to prove it) of a luxury lifestyle, including multiple luxury hotel trips a year, domestic holidays and luxury hotel stays, theatre visits, drinking and more. But he refuses to contribute to school, medical and dental costs of the children (we have been going through mediation for this).

Going back to school financially breaks me every year. In our most recent mediation (unfinished - ex says he is unavailable on weekdays despite no working, and the earliest Saturday we have been given is in a month) I asked for a guarantee that he would pay half of receipts/costs for back to school costs. Our eldest starts high school this year and I do not know how I will pay for it.

The school kids bonus has always been a buffer for me. Without it, I do not know how I could afford sending the kids to school without the things they need.

Even so, it has had to be a juggle. We went from private school, to no private school - ex abruptly stopped paying fees, I paid until my savings ran out, and I've since had to change to a small public school.

My eldest child has special needs. He grows fast and loses things regularly.

The school kids bonus doesn't cover my costs but they are the difference between me being able to pay my rent and not being able to. To being able to feed my kids and not being able to.

I've had to stagger buying certain text books etc, and teachers are usually understanding. But next year, the high school expects uniforms and books to be bought and ready for the start of school.

Then there is our daughter.

I am on the disability pension for depression and anxiety for things done to me by my ex, also I suffer ankylosing spondylitis, fibromyalgia, thyroid disease, and incontinence. Despite this, I am attempting to work to supplement my income.

When I was well, and I was married, I was the main income earner - and in fact at times, the only income earner in our family.

I am not lazy or a dole bludger. I bought and owned a house which my ex sold from under me.

I am trying to make a better life for my kids and I. You don't realise what a difference that school kids bonus makes for someone like me.

It is a difference between the kids and I ending up on the streets, and the kids and I continuing to have a roof over our heads, and me continuing to stride on, continuing to rebuild my career and life, and make a home for my children. To set a good example to them, that you can make mistakes but life goes on. That if you work hard, the effort pays off.

Please don't take away the bonus.

I know many people like me - men and women - who for different reasons are a few hundred dollars away from poverty and homelessness.

The start of the school year is crippling for people like us. We want to keep our kids in school and have the best education possible.

We just need a hand up.  
Don't put us in the poor house.  
Please.

Best wishes,  
Bronwyn Marquardt  
Journalist, travel writer, blogger  
Maid In Australia  
<http://www.maidinaustralia.com>