



Australian Federation of University Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

<http://www.afuw.org.au>

May 1, 2008

The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Workplace Relations and Social Inclusion
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gillard,

The Australian Federation of University Women is concerned at reports that withdrawal of Commonwealth funding for the Working Women's Centres applies nationally and not only to Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia, as initially reported. While the local Presidents of these AFUW Associations may have already contacted you, I am writing now as the national President to ask that funding not be discontinued, given the Centres valuable record in contributing to women's economic security.

Employment-related services are crucially important to women's economic security and thus to their health and well-being, and the welfare of their families. The Working Women's Centres have extensive experience in providing employment-related services for groups of low income and marginalised women, including Aboriginal women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women from rural and remote areas. The Centres have fulfilled a valuable educative function, empowering women with knowledge of their workplace rights and obligations.

Since 1994, Commonwealth funding has underpinned an expansion in the scope and quality of the services provided by the Centres. Even more importantly it has meant that these services can be provided without charge, and the fact that they are free has made it possible for the most economically disadvantaged and marginalized women to access them. If funding is withdrawn the activities of the Centres will be severely limited: they may even be forced to close.

The women who will be most adversely affected are exactly those women who were promised, in the ALP's election campaigning and in subsequent policy pronouncements, that their interests, as ordinary working Australians, would be paramount in the Government's concern. Please re-consider funding for the Centres,

Yours Sincerely

(Dr) Jennifer Strauss AM

President, Australian Federation of University Women Inc