



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

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18 July, 2016

The Hon Karen Andrews MP
Minister of Vocational Education and Skills
PO Box 6022
The House of Representatives
Australian Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

We are delighted to congratulate a woman, a graduate in a STEM field, and with experience in a non-traditional profession, on her appointment as Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and wish to introduce our organisation to you. We are aware you were previously assisting Christopher Pyne as Assistant Minister for Science, and have recently spoken on the importance of STEM education from an early age, so are confident you are well informed of this new portfolio and its significance for building Australia as an innovative nation.

AFGW is the national voice of graduate women working, since 1922, through initiatives in Education especially for the advancement and wellbeing of women and girls. We view education as essential for empowering people; reducing poverty; improving health; understanding human rights; and, maintaining human security and building peace. We have been especially concerned with the education and employment of women and girls in the less traditional fields of engineering and science. The promotion of STEM subjects for women and girls is also a central focus for our international arm Graduate Women International.

In Australia AFGW has endeavoured to promote women's achievements in STEM areas through our national and state scholarships. Each year AFGW, its affiliated state bodies and branches, give over \$0.5 million in scholarships to woman and girls to further their education particularly at tertiary level. Many of these awards go to women studying in the varied fields of science. We also support a number of education projects for girls in the developing countries.

We advocate at state and federal level for improvements in education, training and skills especially through development of curriculum, provision of resources, and initiatives in training staff. We have greatly appreciated the previous work of Senator Scott Ryan and Senator Birmingham especially with initiatives to better regulate private training providers and support the TAFE network and hope you will take up the ongoing VET reforms and the review of skills needs and training. We also share with you in valuing the role of apprenticeships in preparing are young people for productive and meaningful employment.

We wish you well in taking up your new responsibilities.

Tricia Blombery
Convener Standing Committee for Education
for Dr Jane Baker, President AFGW

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