



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

www.afgw.org.au

10 October 2012
The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA
ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gillard

re Objections to A\$320m funding over 10 years to Pacific Island women

It is the view of this National women's organisation, the Australian Federation of Graduate Women (AFGW), that the promise of funding to assist the women of the Pacific island nations in their continuing attempts to gain equality in their homelands is addressing one of Australia's fundamental responsibilities. We congratulate the Gillard Government on a positive and constructive plan to further the work of these women who have achieved so much but who need our support to continue their struggles for many basic human rights and we welcome the grant of \$320 million to expand women's leadership and economic and social opportunities in the region.

In view of recent tirades against yourself and then against many other leading women in our country – we feel compelled to voice our concerns for the progress of women towards leadership in their communities. Education in its many forms is the basis of all progress, especially for our neighbouring sisters in the Pacific islands who have endured many years of violence and poverty, so supporting work there is a wise and positive choice. We would hope that this is a bipartisan policy to be implemented whichever party is in power after the election next year and seek a commitment from the coalition that this is so.

Our organisation, an affiliate of the International Federation of University Women [IFUW], is part of the regional group the Pacific Graduate Women's Network (PGWNet) and the Council of this group is due to meet in Brisbane in November 2012, as part of our own Triennial Conference, and will then be discussing and celebrating this Government initiative. We also expect to be welcoming Papua New Guinea as a new member of the Network and for them to apply to become an affiliate of the International Federation.

The women of PNG in particular deserve all the support Australia can provide as they strengthen and lead their country towards regional peace and prosperity. We sincerely hope this initiative is the beginning of many more occasions of support and friendship offered to them and to our other Pacific neighbours.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Baker, President
Felicity Lord, Convener Status of Women Committee

Cc The Hon Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition
The Hon Julie Collins, Minister for the Status of Women
Senator Michaelia Cash, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women

