



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

ONE NATIONAL CIRCUIT
BARTON

Reference:C12/64972

6 November 2012

Ms Jane Baker
President
Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc
PO Box 224
ENMORE NSW 2042

Dear Ms Baker

Thank you for your letter of 2 October 2012 to the Prime Minister regarding the Triennial Conference of the International Federation of University Women, and the Australian Government's efforts to advance access to education for women and girls in Afghanistan. I have been asked to reply on the Prime Minister's behalf.

As you point out in your letter, the Government places a high priority on supporting the rights of women in Afghanistan and is working closely with the Afghan Government and the international community to improve the opportunities available to women and girls in education.

There has been a significant improvement in the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime. Australia's contribution to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund helps support over 2.7 million Afghan girls to attend school, compared with almost none in 2001. In Uruzgan province, where Australia's whole-of-government efforts in Afghanistan have been focused, AusAID has committed \$35.7 million to the "Children of Uruzgan" program run by Save the Children, to enhance access to basic health and education services for children and their families, with a particular focus on women and girls and those in remote communities. It is estimated that the program supports 300,000 beneficiaries.

Australia is working with the Afghan Government to improve its ability to deliver basic education services for girls across Afghanistan, through targeted initiatives supporting female teachers. Australia also delivers assistance through CARE, co-finances the Malaysia-Australia Education Project for Afghanistan, and is the fourth largest donor to the Global Partnership for Education (having committed \$270 million from 2011-2015); all of which improve educational opportunities in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls.

The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee of the Australian Senate is currently holding an inquiry into Australia's development programs in Afghanistan. For further detail on the Government's contribution to development in Afghanistan, you may wish to access AusAID's submission (no. 16) at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fadt_ctte/afghanistan/submissions.htm.

We recognise that the situation in Afghanistan remains very difficult and there is much to be done. We continue to be committed to maintaining the gains that have been made in Afghanistan. In May, the Prime Minister signed a Long-term Comprehensive Partnership agreement with President Karzai, which affirms our governments' mutual commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

We wish you all the best with your conference planning and your work to promote women's education in Australia and abroad. Thank you once again for bringing this matter to the Prime Minister's attention.

Yours sincerely



Richard Johnson
A/g First Assistant Secretary
International Division