



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.
PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042
<http://www.afgw.org.au>

24 March 2010

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

Dear Ms Gillard

Re: Increase in number of Indigenous Staff Scholarships

The Australian Federation of Graduate Women (formerly the Australian Federation of University Women) has had a number of policies relating to Indigenous education since it held a DEST-funded conference on this topic in 1998. One of these policies recognizes the importance of increasing the number of Indigenous teachers in class-rooms. This is of crucial importance for the educational advancement of Indigenous students, not only in providing positive role models but also in providing teachers with an understanding of possible cultural and linguistic matters that can inhibit their progress. It has also, however, been important for **all** students to have teachers who reflect the diversity of the Australian population and are able to enhance inter-cultural understanding.

We are disappointed therefore to see from the current DEEWR website that the number of nation-wide Indigenous Staff Scholarships remains static at five, the number we understand as established under the preceding Liberal Government.

Given your Government's commitment to increasing the school participation of Indigenous children, and given that the number of Indigenous students graduating from university is increasing, even if at a rate less than desirable, thereby creating a pool of potential teachers, surely now is the time to increase the incentive for some of those graduates to become teachers. Indigenous undergraduates are conspicuous among the poorest group of students: they need financial help to undertake the postgraduate study needed to qualify as teachers.

We urge you to provide such help by a substantial increase in the number of government-funded Indigenous Staff Scholarships,

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Jane Baker President AFGW Inc

cc. The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs

