



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

PO Box 48 Nedlands WA 6009

www.afgw.org.au

29 March 2013

The Treasurer,
The Hon Wayne Swan, MP
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Swan,

I write to you on behalf of the many members of AFGW Inc out of concern for the ongoing reductions in funding to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS); the most recent of which has resulted in the cancellation of the 2013 Work, Life and Family Survey: Work, Care and Family Balance (WoLFS), which includes the *Time Use Survey*. AFGW is the national voice of graduate women: since 1922 we have been working through initiatives in education for the advancement and wellbeing of women and girls. AFGW is a member of eS4W is one of six national women's alliances that engage actively with the Australian Government on policy issues.

We understand that this decision has been taken in response to the recently announced MYEFO savings, which requires ABS to save around \$1.1m to \$1.4m per annum. Cancelling the 2013 WoLFS will make a significant contribution to these savings, but we argue that this is a false economy, especially when considered through a gender lens. The *Time Use Surveys* are the only accurate record of the unpaid work that underpins economic activity, much of which is undertaken by women. This information is vital for good policy and planning especially around the supply of care and the participation of women in the paid workforce. We respectfully draw your attention to the report recently commissioned by eS4W and published in *Counting on Care Work: The Care Economy in Australia*, which is available at <http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/the-australian-care-economy/counting-on-care-work-in-australia>. This report is the first comprehensive quantification of economic activity stemming from the care sector in Australia; it argues that policy changes are required to achieve gender equality in this area. We are also reminded of two recent pieces legislation, the *Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)* and the *Human Rights and Anti-discrimination Bill (2012)*, both of which required data analysis based on gender, suggesting that funding cuts that adversely affect the ability of the Australian Bureau of Statistics to measure the impact of any policy changes on women are unwise.

Marilyn Waring first warned of the dangers of ignoring the economic value of women's unpaid work in her 1988 book, *Counting for Nothing*. Since then many governments, including the Australian government, have at least attempted to record this vital information. Many policy departments need this data to understand and respond to changes in work and family balance and craft policy affecting a wide range of public and private life including workforce participation, health, housing, transport and education. For this reason we ask you to ensure that the *Work, Life and Family Survey: Work, Care and Family Balance* is maintained.

Dr Madeleine M. Laming
President AFGW