



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

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21 December 2015

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Minister for Women
PO Box 6110
The Senate
Australian Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I would like, on behalf of our new President Dr Jane Baker and the Association, to extend our congratulations to you for your multiple ministerial appointments. We are delighted that among these you have taken several opportunities in your role as Minister for Women to champion the position and value of women in the Australian society.

On this occasion I refer particularly to your Press Release of 8 December announcing STEM funding for Australian women. As you will know 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 have been especially concerned with the education and employment of women and girls in the less traditional fields of engineering and science and have promoted this through our membership of the alliance for the economic Security 4 Women (eS4W). We have endeavoured also 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 noted in your press release that the Coalition Government has invested \$13 million over five years in STEM funding for women. One of the projects mentioned to be implemented under this funding is the expansion of the Science in Australian Gender Equity pilot to cover more Australia science and research institutions. We applauded the initiative of the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in undertaking the SAGE project with the Universities last September. We believe an accreditation program which improves the promotion and retention of women and gender minorities in STEM is an important initiative not only for women and girls but for all Australian science and technology fields.

The promotion of STEM subjects for women and girls is also a central focus for our international arm Graduate Women International (formerly the International Federation of University Women). Enclosed is a copy of the pamphlet which was circulated at the UN Commission for the Status of Women earlier this year. I hope you will find it interesting and the statistics helpful in your further promotion of the importance of women's STEM education, skills, and employment.

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

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