

Graduate Women - South Australia

GW-SA
(formerly AFUW-SA)

**A member of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women
and the International Federation of University Women
with consultative status with the United Nations
particularly UNESCO in Geneva.**

**The Australian Federation of Graduate Women is the only Australian educational organization
connected with 72 other national affiliated members of the International Federation of University
Women.**

<http://www.afgw.org.au>

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February 4th 2015
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The Hon. Susan Close MP
Minister for Education
GPO Box 1152
Adelaide SA 5001

Dear Dr. Close,

On behalf of Graduate Women SA I send congratulations to you on your appointment to this vital role at a time when the Federal government is undermining the Gonski Report and has threatened, in the White Paper put out by the Federal Minister for Education, to find a rationale, through the way they define Australia's Federation, to justify their intention to remove, over a decade, \$80 billion from the States and Territories from their public health and public education. It is increasingly apparent that the quality of health and the capacity to gain positive results from the education available is connected with one's health, state of mind and the situation facing a student's family.

I have included copies of newsletters to give you a clear understanding of the dual role of Graduate Women-SA, affiliated as it is with the national body, the Australian Federation of Graduate Women and the International Federation of University Women. GW-SA, based in the Women Graduates Association established at the University of Adelaide in 1914, has just celebrated its centenary. Our dual roles are these: the provision of bursaries, which is in the hands of the AFUW-SA Trust, for South Australian universities. They include the Maria Lane Bursary for Aboriginal undergraduate students to honour the Aboriginal liaison person from the University of South Australia whom we valued so much. Our other role is advocacy on behalf of girls and women in education and in areas allied to education through social justice.

That is why I have included copies of the letter sent to Minister Gago about the successful STEM Sista program which has been put in place in the northern suburbs to help girls find a future in careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. I sent a copy to Minister Rankine and include a copy of my letter to Jayne Johnston, Head of Schools.

I was on the Flinders University Council then their Academic Senate when Professor Ian Chubb, now Chief Scientist, was Vice-Chancellor. My report on his address to the Australian College of Educators in 2014 is in the latest newsletter of GW-SA. He made clear that interdisciplinary approaches are an essential part of our educational focus for the future. We cannot go on just repeating the past, even if we repeat it through a digital medium.

However, the subjects as 'silos' approach of the Federal Minister is guaranteed to undermine that essential cross-disciplinary approach that needs development in the secondary schools. The advocacy aspect of our role falls to me. [I have recently discovered that at the University of Florida an approach with the acronym SSTEM – science, the humanities, technology, engineering, mathematics – has been put forward by a Professor of English Literature.]

Recently, I have found it more useful to seek answers by writing to my Member of Parliament, the Hon Paul Caica. In particular I have been concerned about the level of support of a hearing teacher in the APY Lands. It was .5 for 40% of students with a hearing loss and I was made

aware that no effort had been made to increase that level of support, although technically much has been done to make class rooms more 'friendly' for students with hearing loss on the APY Lands. This matters, of course, since the Gonski funds should be going to schools and students with the greatest needs.

Graduate Women SA wishes you well in your important portfolio. On a personal note, with Dr Elaine Butler of GW-SA and WAVE, I have an interest in encouraging educators to value both the academic *and* the vocational equally, since so many students come to the theoretical through the practical. So many mature-aged women began in what were the 'technical' schools, went to TAFEs and then on to university or became significant in extending the work of the TAFEs internationally as Joy Fisher did through her work to build TAFE connections with Vietnam.

The practical aspect of learning is more expensive and it has not been helped by the Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Industry and Science, Mr Macfarlane, cutting funds for the Trade Training in Schools program. And we are very concerned about the undermining of the TAFEs by private for profit organizations which seem to have a history of cheating students. That appears to be why Senator Birmingham has set up a hot-line for students' complaints about the quality of what they are receiving.] I have a copy of 'A Broader Vision: Voices of Vocational Education in Twentieth Century South Australia' reviewed by Dr Margaret Secombe of the School of Education at the University of Adelaide if you wish to see it. Port Adelaide had a marvellous school in Port Adelaide Girls Technical High School which, with The Parks and Marion High School – all inclusive schools – were destroyed by Rob Lucas when he was Minister for Education.

Yours sincerely

Erica Jolly MACE, CUniv [Flinders]
Education/health liaison
Graduate Women-SA

PS. I have received a reply from the Office of Minister Gago, thanking GW-SA for its letter. I will need to contact the organisers to see if I can sit in on one of their workshops.