



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

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26 July, 2016

The Hon Kate Ellis MP
Shadow Minister for TAFE and Vocational Education
PO Box 6022
The House of Representatives
Australian Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Kate,

We are delighted to congratulate another Labor woman on her appointment as Shadow Minister for TAFE and Vocational Education. We have noted your work in other areas of the Education portfolio so are confident you are well informed of this new portfolio and its significance for building Australia as an innovative nation.

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 view education as essential for empowering people; reducing poverty; improving health; understanding human rights; and, maintaining human security and building peace. While our main concerns have traditionally been with Higher Education in the sense of university education, AFGW has increasingly recognised that the blurring of traditional lines between the university and VET sectors, and the growth of pathways between them, means that the VET sector is now a matter to which we should pay greater attention.

We have been especially concerned with the education and employment of women and girls in the less traditional fields of engineering and science. The promotion of STEM subjects for women and girls is also a central focus for our international arm Graduate Women International. TAFE and other publicly-funded post-secondary education have been very significant in enabling women to reach their full potential and contribute to society in Australia. TAFE has been vital in giving women a second chance by enabling them to re-train to re-enter the workforce. We have made submissions to the last two government enquiries into TAFE

We advocate at state and federal level for improvements in education, training and skills especially through development of curriculum, provision of resources, and initiatives in training staff. We have appreciated the previous work of Senator Scott Ryan and Senator Birmingham especially with initiatives to better regulate private training providers and support the TAFE network and hope you will keep the Government focussed on further VET reforms.

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 also support a number of education projects for girls in the developing countries.

We wish you well in taking up your new responsibilities.

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

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