



Ms Linda Smith
WAVE National Convenor
PO Box 4102
Royal North Shore Hospital
ST LEONARDS NSW 2065

Dear Ms Smith

Thank you for your letter regarding women in adult and vocational education.

Equal participation of women at all levels of education – primary, secondary and post-compulsory – is a fundamental precondition of equality.

A strong public education system at all levels is essential to achieving full participation in education and training. Labor is committed to a quality education system that prepares Australians for the jobs of the future.

A Shorten Labor Government will:

- Fund the Gonski reforms on-time and in-full, so every child, in every school, is funded according to need and has the support they need to achieve their best.
- Introduce a TAFE funding guarantee to make sure a guaranteed proportion of government funding for vocational education stays with TAFE, so that our public TAFE system can continue to provide training opportunities for those who need it most.
- Stop Malcolm Turnbull's \$100,000 degrees and introduce a university Student Funding Guarantee. Under the guarantee, government funding will be \$2500 more per undergraduate place in 2018 than under the Liberals' plan – an increase of more than 27 per cent. To give universities certainty, Labor will legislate the Student Funding Guarantee and index its value so it isn't eroded over time.

Under-representation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and other non-traditional areas of employment is bad for equity and bad for our economy. Seventy five per cent of the fastest-growing occupations today require STEM skills, and employment in STEM occupations is projected to grow at almost twice the rate of other occupations.

Australia has a chronic shortage of women graduating with computer science or coding skills. Since 2001, the rate of women enrolling in an IT degree has actually fallen from about 1 in 4 to just 1 in 10.

Continuing to see women fall behind in IT will limit our capacity for all Australians to capture and embrace the opportunities of the digital economy, let alone meet the projected

demand for ICT skills across industry. The lack of diversity will affect our ability to innovate as a nation and to address the gender wage gap.

Labor has released the following positive policies to address the under-representation of women in the rapidly growing STEM fields:

- Labor's Girls into Code program – a \$4.5 million grants program to support organisations that promote, encourage and inspire girls to learn code – will address the under-representation of women in IT, currently only 28 per cent.
- Labor's STEM Award Degrees – 20,000 a year for five years, which will see students graduate HECS-HELP debt-free – will have a selection criteria targeting increasing enrolments in under-represented groups like women.
- Labor will provide 25,000 scholarships for recent STEM graduates to train as teachers – with a requirement that half will be women.

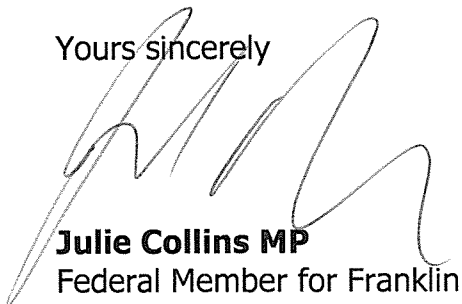
The Abbott-Turnbull Government has cut \$29 billion from our schools, \$12 billion from our universities and \$2.75 billion from skills and VET funding. The Liberals are still pursuing their unfair and unnecessary plan for university funding cuts, deregulation and \$100,000 degrees.

The Liberals continue to argue the case for university funding cuts and deregulation. While the Budget delayed these cuts until after the election, the fact is that it remains the Liberals' policy to cut funding for undergraduate education by 20 per cent and introduce \$100,000 degrees.

Only Labor is committed to fair and accessible education at all levels, driving productivity, growth, and gender equity.

Thank you again for contacting me. I hope the information above is of assistance. If you have any further enquiries please contact me on 6244 1222.

Yours sincerely



Julie Collins MP
Federal Member for Franklin

27 May 2016