



**THE HON KAREN ANDREWS MP**  
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Our Ref MC16-005390

Ms Linda Simon  
National Convenor  
Women in Adult and Vocational Education  
PO 4102 RNSH  
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2 SEP 2016

Dear Ms Simon

Thank you for your letter of 1 August 2016, congratulating me on my recent appointment as the Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and raising with me the areas of interest of Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE).

I am honoured the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, has appointed me to take on this important role in the 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Australia.

Australia's economic growth and business productivity will be enhanced by a strong vocational education and training (VET) system. A dynamic sector is required for people gaining qualifications to reach their full potential. With a vocational qualification, graduates can contribute their talents throughout the economy, from small businesses to large nation building infrastructure projects. I want the millions of people undertaking vocational education and training, including women, to acquire the skills necessary for life-long learning and career opportunities. As one of the first two women to graduate from my mechanical engineering degree, I understand the importance of supporting pathways for women.

Australian Apprenticeships continue to be a central part of a thriving VET system – contributing to a highly skilled labour force that ultimately improves Australia's productivity and competitiveness. Australian Apprenticeships help businesses meet their skills needs, offer young people an industry backed earning and learning pathway, provide mature workers with upskilling opportunities and supply valuable trade and technical skills to the economy.

I look forward to building on the strong apprenticeships reform foundations established by my predecessors. These foundations include the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN), which provides individuals and employers with tailored support from pre-commencement through to completion, and Trade Support Loans, which provide up to \$20,000 over four years to assist eligible Australian Apprentices with the cost of living and learning while undertaking their training. We have also invested in the *Apprenticeships Training - alternative delivery pilots* initiative, which will test alternative training approaches and support increased flexibility and innovation in apprenticeships and trade training delivery. We are also continuing to deliver the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme, which provides direct support to employers and Australian Apprentices to encourage engagement with the system.

In addition to these important reforms, I released the Apprenticeships Reform Advisory Group Recommendation Report (the Report), developed by industry, government and VET sector representatives. The Report makes 22 recommendations for reform of the national Australian Apprenticeships system, covering pre-apprenticeships, incentive arrangements, alternative models of delivery and broader system improvements. I will be using this work as the basis for collaborative discussions with state and territory Skills Ministers on potential reform options, and as a launch pad for engagement with key stakeholders on the apprenticeships system.

As we continue our work on reforms, we are also looking to build science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) capabilities to take advantage of technological advances for all our industries, businesses and infrastructure. To progress this goal, the Australian Government will be offering 1200 Rural and Regional Enterprise scholarships for students to undertake STEM studies, as well as 1200 new scholarships for South Australia, both of which will be open to VET and higher education students.

Furthermore, the Government has made a commitment to internships and post-school career advice which will increase support for women and girls to study and work in STEM-related fields. We will provide this funding towards the development of a new and contemporary National Career Education Strategy, as part of a broader package aimed at increasing support for women to choose to participate in STEM.

Thank you again for your good wishes and for sharing your views on apprenticeships and broader VET. I look forward to working with WAVE to deliver the best possible outcomes for all students of Australia's vocational education and training system.

Yours sincerely



**Karen Andrews MP**