

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013

Dear Premier O'Farrell,

Thank you for your letter of 8<sup>th</sup> July in response to my letter on behalf of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women expressing our concern at the proposed cuts to the TAFE system.

I congratulate your Government on its decision to provide additional funds to support training of indigenous people, people with a disability and those living in regional or remote areas but I wish to convey our continued concern about overall funding to the TAFE system and about the recently announced increase in student fees.

I agree with you that our TAFE system is the leading provider of vocational education. It was built up over decades by those in the system and funded by the taxpayers of NSW and it is now under threat due to the funding cuts and increased student fees introduced by your Government. Anecdotally the morale among students and staff of our TAFEs is at an all-time low with a significant number of staff actively seeking employment elsewhere. The best and brightest will go first and will be difficult to replace.

Many people wonder about the sense of making these cuts in view of the potential growth in the international education sector from China. The education of Vocational Education teachers and English teachers is a significant factor in the expected growth as a result of demand from China and our TAFEs are well placed to meet this demand. Surely now is not the time to weaken the system with funding cuts and increased fees.

I note your reference to your *Smart and Skilled Reforms* but I remain unconvinced about these reforms and respectfully suggest that this terminology is a euphemism for reduced funding and diminished services.

Virginia Ross

President

Australian Federation of Graduate Women