THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
LEADER OF THE HOUSE
MEMBER FOR STURT

17 SEP 2015

Our Ref MC15-003485

Ms Tricia Blombery
Convenor Standing Committee for Education
Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.
11 Park Road
MARRICKVILLE NSW 2204

Dear Ms Blombery

Thank you for your letter of 2 August 2015 concerning science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education for women and girls.

I welcome the interest of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women (AFGW) in expanding its interests to the skills and school sectors. Encouraging girls and young women to study STEM subjects – including coding – and showing them some of the great careers built on science, engineering, mathematics and technology is vitally important to our nation's future. Igniting an interest in STEM subjects at the school level is, I believe, the best way to ensure that we increase the number of students taking up these subjects in higher education and in their future careers.

At the national level, you may be aware that the Australian Government is developing a national strategy to foster STEM skills and knowledge. As part of this work, the Government recently sought feedback from industry, the research and education sectors and the wider community on a consultation paper *Vision for a Science Nation - Responding to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future*. If you have not already done so, you may wish to read the paper, which is available at www.science.gov.au.

In terms of current initiatives, the Government has committed $21.6 million over four years for the Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program (AMSPP) to support 22 university led outreach projects to encourage school students to study mathematics and science at the secondary and the post-secondary level. A number of these projects focus on encouraging young women to explore and engage in mathematics and science. For example, the University of Melbourne's *Growing Tall Poppies Programme* aims to increase participation and retention of girls studying physics to Year 12 through immersion in a research-active environment. Further information on the AMSPP can be found at www.education.gov.au/australian-maths-and-science-partnerships-programme-amspp.