



## GRADUATE WOMEN-NSW Inc

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Mr Alan Tudge,  
Minister for Education and Youth,  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I write on behalf of Graduate Women-NSW, an organization that has worked for over 125 years to empower women through education, developing scholarly and professional expertise at all levels throughout society. As a group that values education and the advances that are made in research, we express our profound disappointment that those occupying or acting in the role of Minister of Education do not appear to share these values.

In English, we might say that someone “knows their onions”, indicating that they have a particular expertise. The French have a different phrase: “s’occuper de ses oignons”, meaning to look after your own affairs and not interfere in the affairs of others. Both phrases come to mind in this most recent example of political involvement in the allocation of funds to Australian scholars through the Australian Research Council grants scheme, a peer reviewed process which draws on scholarly expertise to support innovative investigations.

Disappointingly, once again, open letters, column inches and airtime have lamented the recent veto by the acting Minister for Education of funding for six ARC Discovery Projects on the grounds that they “do not demonstrate value for taxpayers’ money nor contribute to the national interest”. This invocation of the test of research being “in the national interest” is of particular concern. We note that these projects are all in the Humanities, a move that is likely to further disadvantage women.

The peer review process is based on the judgements of people who “know their onions”. We implore you to leave the decisions on research funding in the hands of experts, operating in a well-respected system. Politicians have their own onions to look after.

Hilary Yerbury, Education Convenor on behalf of  
Tricia Blombery  
President  
GW-NSW Inc

C.C. The Hon. Stuart Robert MP Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business  
The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP Shadow Minister for Education and Training