



## GRADUATE WOMEN VICTORIA

As at 2/12 Tollington Ave  
Malvern East, VIC 3145

21 November 2012

The Hon. E. Baillieu  
Premier of Victoria  
Parliament House  
Spring St  
East Melbourne 3002.

Dear Mr Baillieu,

### **Re Education Legislation Amendment (Governance) Bill**

I write to convey to you the unanimous motion passed at the recent Annual General Meeting of Graduate Women Victoria condemning the intention of this legislation to remove elected representatives of staff and students from the Councils of Victorian universities.

This proposal seems to have been based neither on any factual information about the value of the contributions that such representatives have made in the past to the governance of these institutions, nor on consultation with the senior administrators of the universities. Rather it appears based either on an ideological aversion to participatory governance that ill befits a democratic society or on a misguided concept of higher education as simply a business enterprise. Certainly sound financial management is essential to these complex institutions and it is appropriate that they should have on their governing bodies persons with suitable experience and skills in business management.

The essential nature and primary purposes of universities, however, is not to be commercial institutions, but places where learning and research take place within an autonomous community that can pursue inquiry and discussion with the freedom that is necessary for the full development of knowledge and understanding that will ultimately benefit all society. The people who are best skilled to protect the integrity of knowledge and to understand the context in which it is most calculated to flourish are the academics who have been trained to this end and the students to whom they impart this understanding as

well as the means necessary to achieve its realisation. Without the input of both groups, a university Council must be an impoverished and narrow instrument of governance.

Graduate Women Victoria is not an organisation for women employed in universities and does not have a direct or vested interest in this matter. It is an organisation of women graduates – in diverse disciplines from diverse Victorian and other Australian or international universities – who have an ongoing commitment to supporting higher education through the provision of scholarships and through advocacy on education policy generally, but especially as it affects tertiary education.

We add our voice to the numerous voices already raised against this proposal – not only from Vice-Chancellors, the NTEU and NUS, but from other members of the public. We understand that the legislation has already been presented in the House. That doesn't mean that there is no time for wiser counsels to prevail,

Yours Sincerely

Dr Jennifer Strauss AM

President, Graduate Women Victoria