

# GRADUATE WOMEN VICTORIA

*Serving and empowering women through education and advocacy*



05.04.15

The Hon James Merlino MP  
Minister for Education  
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place  
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

Dear Mr Merlino

## **Re Sale of Government Schools Currently Surplus to Need**

Graduate Women Victoria is a non-government organisation working to support the higher education of women and girls through a substantial scholarship program, but it is also an advocate for universal access to primary and secondary education that is public, secular and free.

We have noted with pleasure the changes in policy introduced by your government that have led to restoration of TAFE funding and a more rigorous review of the qualifications of private providers in the VET sector, but we are disappointed that you have not yet abandoned the previous governments policy of selling off school grounds and buildings currently considered “surplus to requirements.”

The age profiles of suburbs do change over decades, but there are clear demographic signals that the student population right across greater Melbourne will expand greatly in the coming decade. If estimates indicate that an additional 448 primary schools will be needed to meet demand, there is certain to also be an increased need for secondary schools. Land will have to be found for these schools and this will be an expensive exercise with land values steadily increasing as population density rises. We have already seen that there is an urgent need to replace the previously sold-off Prahran High School and that this is proving difficult and potentially very expensive as other educational institutions are competing for any desirable location.

Schools are valuable public assets. It is particularly galling to know that those already sold have in many case been re-sold at substantially higher prices than the government received for them, thus enriching private enterprise at the expense of public resources. Surely it would be possible – and better long-term planning – to find a temporary revenue-raising use for those schools that are now on the Department of Education’s “For sale” list and be confident of being able to meet the needs of Victoria’s future school children. We respectfully urge a change of policy on this matter,

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Jennifer Strauss AM  
President, Graduate Women Victoria

