



2/12 Tollington Ave  
Malvern East, VIC 3145  
21 January 2016

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

Dear Mr Merlino

**Re: Gonski Funding; Shortage of Schools; Loss of Teachers**

Graduate Women Victoria (GWV) is a non-government organisation of women graduates whose mission is to further the access of all girls and women to affordable quality lifelong education. To this end, we strongly support adequate funding of public education.

We would be grateful for information about what action your government is proposing to take on three matters.

Our first concern is the very disappointing announcement by the Federal Government late last year that it would not honour its commitments to provide the remaining funding agreed under the Gonski report. The recommendations of that report were undoubtedly the best possible and most widely approved suite of recommendations for achieving sustainable and equitable public education. We had expected to see reports of strong opposition from State Governments to the Federal decision and are disappointed that this has, apparently, not eventuated. Can you inform us whether the Victorian Government has attempted to have the decision reversed? If not, what steps can it take to try to achieve some of the recommendations contained in the original report?

Secondly, we are concerned by recent reports in *The Age* of a looming shortage of public schools in Victoria. Indeed it appears that the shortage is already present, with existing schools being required to increase their 2016 enrolments and experiencing substantial increases in the number of temporary classrooms they are obliged to use. The inadequacy of infrastructure has been a long-term problem in Victoria and the situation has been exacerbated by the short-term policy of selling schools with currently low student enrolments, a policy which GWV has questioned several times in correspondence to the Government.

Thirdly, we note that other education reports on public schooling reveal an alarming exodus of teachers from the profession within the first five years after they obtain their qualifications.

Although job insecurity is often cited as a major cause, there is no doubt that inadequate infrastructure and overcrowding contribute to job dissatisfaction for teachers. The discussion papers released in 2015 by your Department as part of the branding of Victoria as the Education State rightly emphasised the centrality of excellent teaching to student learning. Excellent teachers who are not offered decent working conditions have, and are likely to take up, the option of leaving: students who cannot find decent learning conditions in public schooling do not have that option. They, as well as their teachers, deserve better.

We would very much appreciate your response on how your Government will act to solve these problems,

Yours Sincerely

Dr Jennifer Strauss AM  
President, Graduate Women Victoria