



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

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29 January 2016

The Hon. Peter Chandler MLA
Minister for Education
Parliament House
GPO Box 3146
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Mr Chandler

Re: Reported Immediate Closure of School for Pregnant and Nursing Mothers

This letter reflects the concerns of the Australian Federation of University Women (AFGW), an Association of women graduates whose purpose is to promote lifelong quality education for all girls and women, especially those who have experienced or are experiencing disadvantage.

We are greatly concerned by reports that the Darwin school providing an alternative education program for pregnant and young mothers seeking to complete their high school education is being closed at short notice.

This decision deepens socio-economic disparities these young teens face, and certainly does not assist the already low year 12 completion rate and risk of social isolation for disadvantaged students in the NT (Bureau of Statistics, 2015 & NATSEM Report, 2013), especially those seeking to Close the Gap of Indigenous disadvantage. This decision perpetuates the very cycles of poverty and trauma that such a program is designed to assist such vulnerable youths and their families to overcome.

These disadvantaged young women are not invisible. It is your duty of care under international, and domestic rule of law to recognise their right as minors to access appropriate education and the opportunities it can provide to participate fully in society.

We strongly recommend that the program continue to receive funding and other supports from the Northern Territory Education Department, in order to secure its continuance as an excellent model for higher year 12 attainment rates in an alternative schooling pathway in the region.

Yours Sincerely,

Tricia Blombery
Convener AFGW Standing Committee on Education

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