



Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance
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Minister for Women

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C-ECTF-24/4972

Ms Sandy Smith
President
National Council of Women Queensland Inc.

03 JUL 2024

Email: info@ncwq.org.au

Dear Ms Smith, *Sandy*

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2024, regarding the National Council of Women Queensland's (NCWQ) response to the Australian University Accord. I acknowledge some time has passed since you wrote and I thank you for your patience.

I appreciate the NCWQ sharing your recommendations with me in response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report with a particular focus on the importance of engaging and supporting women when completing higher education studies in both traditional and non-traditional fields.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank NCWQ and your patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland, for your advocacy and dedication to empowering women. The Office for Women has been a proud supporter of the NCWQ Bursary Program since its inception in 2009. Together the Queensland Government have assisted Queensland women to gain tertiary qualifications and addressed issues of unemployment and intergenerational disadvantage.

As you are aware, to achieve the Accord's vision for higher education in Australia, the Report outlines over 70 policy ideas for further exploration with key targets by 2035, and five priority actions for immediate implementation. Cross-jurisdictional Working Groups have been established to support the priority actions, with representation by each State and Territory. The Department of Education is the nominated Queensland Government representative. Therefore, I have referred your correspondence to the Honourable Di Farmer MP, Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice, for consideration and response.

I agree with you that unpaid placements for trainee nurses and midwives can be a barrier for students, so I was pleased that the Commonwealth Government announced the Commonwealth Prac Payment in the Federal Budget and from 1 July 2025 eligible students will receive \$319 per week during their placement. This payment will support students in female-dominated courses of nursing, teaching, midwifery and social work.

The Queensland Government is providing a nurses and midwives a \$5,000 Cost of Living Allowance in their final year for undertaking unpaid placements in rural, regional, and remote communities. The Queensland Government does not want cost to prevent Queenslanders from pursuing a career in healthcare that they've worked so hard for.

Economic security is key for women and girls to achieve gender equality, which is why the Queensland Government has put it at the heart of the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2022-27*. Lower wages in female-dominated industries, gendered stereotypes, workplace segregation and education inequity all contribute to the imbalance that can prevent women and girls from leading safe, healthy and successful lives.

Thank you once again for bringing your recommendations regarding the Australian University Accord to my attention. Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, I have arranged for Ms Cynthia Kennedy, Director, Office for Women, on telephone 0408 672 905 or via email Cynthia.Kennedy@health.qld.gov.au, to be available to assist you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Fentiman', written in a cursive style.

Shannon Fentiman MP

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services

Minister for Women

Member for Waterford