



Feminist Legal Clinic Inc.

Benledi House, 186 Glebe Point Road, Glebe NSW 2037
PO Box 273, Summer Hill NSW 2130
Mobile: 0402 467 476
www.feministlegal.org
ABN: 17 360 484 300

The Hon Alan Tudge MP
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Monday 13 September 2021

By email: alan.tudge.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

Gender Affirmation Guidelines Undermining Academic Freedom

Thank you for the letter from your Assistant Secretary Mr Damian Coburn dated 2 July 2021.

Mr Coburn seems to have the false impression that we are calling for the silencing of other people's views. This is clearly not the case. However, we are extremely concerned by the heavy-handed silencing of women, including senior academics, who disagree with a "gender affirmation" approach.

I am heartened that the Minister agrees that there should be opportunity for these contested ideas to be debated. Unfortunately, it is our experience that debate on this topic is being methodically and forcibly shut down. Feminist Legal Clinic is regularly being called upon to assist women (including students and academics) who have been threatened with sacking or subjected to disciplinary proceedings because they have expressed a view recognising the biological reality of sex.

I am pleased to learn from Mr Coburn's letter that UNSW is revising its policies to make clearer that overarching academic freedom and freedom of speech has priority. As suggested, I have now written to the University Council to clarify to what extent they regard the Gender Affirmation Guidelines to be mandatory for staff. I will keep you posted.

I look forward to hearing when the Minister decides to join his brave colleague, Senator Claire Chandler in publicly condemning these incursions on women's human rights.

Yours faithfully

Anna Kerr
Principal Solicitor