

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

1 December 2025

Dear Professor Lawson and Professor West,

We write on behalf of the Australian Women's History Network (AWHN) to express our concern about the advertisement of an insecure, fixed-term, teaching-only position in Women's and Gender Studies at Flinders University.

The AWHN promotes research and writing in the fields of feminist, gender and women's history and is an affiliate of the International Federation for Research in Women's History. It is our understanding that the position of one of Australia's leading gender scholars, Professor Barbara Baird AM, is to be replaced by a 12 month teaching-only contract. The failure to replace Professor Baird with a permanent, balanced (T & R) position suggests a lack of commitment to the future of Women's and Gender Studies, a vital program of teaching and research.

As a '[national crisis](#)' of gender and family violence shows no sign of abating, the LGBTQI community witnesses a startling [global rise of transphobic violence and discrimination](#), and South Australians resist [ongoing attacks](#) on the hard won [legislation decriminalising abortion](#), it is vital that our public universities support areas like the Women's and Gender Studies program at Flinders University. To undermine it on the occasion of Professor Baird's retirement— who is not only a leading expert in gender studies, but also a leading figure in the decriminalisation of abortion in South Australia— sends a concerning message.

Flinders' Women's and Gender Studies program is the longest standing such program in Australia. It is widely recognised in South Australia and across the country for its strong expertise and longstanding connections with feminist and queer scholarly and activist communities. Its staff and graduates are held in high regard for their significant scholarly contributions to the field.

We seek assurance from Flinders leadership that the university will maintain this important program of research and teaching. This requires guaranteeing that students will benefit from research-led teaching from a gender studies specialist hired in a secure and balanced (T & R) position to replace Professor Baird.

As the rights of minority groups come under increasing pressure around the globe, Australian public universities must play an important role in protecting and nourishing research and teaching that defends academic and political freedoms. We urge Flinders to demonstrate its commitment to current and future students in the humanities and social sciences by securing the future of the Women's and Gender Studies program.

Australian Women's History Network

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

The Australian Women's History Network (AWHN) is affiliated with the International Federation for Research in Women's History <http://www.ifrwh.com/index.html>

Email: auswhn@gmail.com | Web: www.auswhn.com.au/ | Bluesky: [@auswhn.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/auswhn.bsky.social) |

Twitter/X: [@auswhn](https://twitter.com/auswhn) | LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/auswhn/

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK