

The Hon Julia Gillard AC
27th Prime Minister of Australia

Anna Benson
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Anna

Dear Ms Benson,

Thank you for your lovely words and request for me to address the Ringwood Rocks Respect Carnival. Unfortunately, due to my extensive commitments both in Australia and overseas, I will be unable to join you to address your students, but I would like to provide you with a message to read on the day of the unveiling of the artwork at the end of June.

I'm sorry I could not be with you today, but want to pass on my deep gratitude for being selected to represent the Humanities faculty area as part of your school's Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships Initiative. I would also like to thank you for the portrait you attached. It has been printed and is hanging in pride of place in my office.

I am so heartened that your school is working to prepare the next generation of resilient and empowered women. My own education helped fuel my passion for politics, and helped shape the future trajectory of my life tremendously. I immersed myself in a world of knowledge and ideas, and I revelled in the chance to debate them with my peers. I hope the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships Initiative provides the same kind of opportunities for your students.

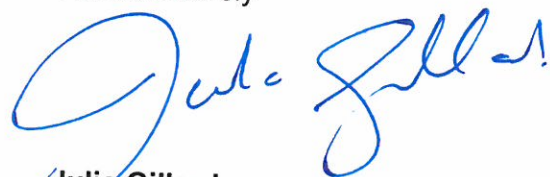
I want to see young women, like the students of your school, be the next generation of leaders who will continue the fight to see women equally represented in Australia and around the world.

Currently women are under-represented in leadership positions across the spectrum of politics, business, civil society and the judiciary. Given merit is distributed equally amongst the sexes, we should be seeing equal numbers of women in leadership. That is why it is so important to ensure that we continue to foster the next group of women leaders and break down the barriers that stand in their way. It's an issue I'm very passionate about and why I helped establish the Global Institute of Women's Leadership in Kings College London, which I have announced recently.

I am a huge optimist about the future and the foundation stone of that optimism is my belief in our collective ability to nurture and develop the next generation of leaders, and it thrills me to see your school take an initiative to actively pursue this cause.

I wish you all the best with the future of the program.

Yours sincerely



Julia Gillard

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