

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
SHADOW MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Mr Grant Hehir
Auditor-General
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Auditor-General,

I request that the Australian National Audit Office consider auditing the Federal Government's administration of Australian Research Council grants.

In our view, the Government's unacceptable delay in announcing Australian Research Grants is a serious failure of public administration - a matter of national interest that bears further scrutiny.

With only seven working days left this year, researchers across the nation are yet to receive a decision about their 2022 Australian Research Grant applications.

We understand this is the longest delay in announcing these grants in thirty years.

This is causing significant uncertainty for around five thousand Australian researchers who don't know whether they'll have a job next year or whether their projects will have funding.

That is disaster for individual researchers and projects. It's also a disaster for our nation - for our economy, and for jobs.

We fear many of our brilliant researchers will be driven overseas, or out of research altogether.

COVID-19 has already meant a very difficult two years for universities. It's estimated that 7000 researchers have lost their jobs since the start of the pandemic. The uncertainty created by the delay in announcing Australian Research Grants only compounds these difficulties.

New technologies and breakthroughs don't come out of thin air. We need researchers to invent them. These discoveries will underpin the growth of local industries and create many jobs for Australians.

Thank you for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,



Tanya Plibersek