

8 April 2025

Professor Peter Shergold AC  
Chair, Australian Research Council (ARC)

**Via submission to online portal**

Dear Professor Shergold AC

**Submission to Australian Research Council (ARC) on the Policy Review of the National Competitive Grants Program.**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Policy Review of the National Competitive Grants Program. TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) is the peak national body which represents Australia's national network of publicly owned Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and university TAFE divisions. We commend the outlined goals of the policy review, particularly those which seek to streamline and reduce the administrative burden of the NCGP, improve connections across research sectors, support early-stage research and move beyond the basic and applied research dichotomy. The purpose of TDA's submission is to bring to your attention the underutilised and overlooked potential for TAFE-led research (particularly applied research) to contribute to Australian research and innovation, and to improve the accessibility and reach of research and development activities.

TAFE institutes have demonstrated capability to conduct research, particularly applied research undertaken in partnership with industry and other stakeholders. In our recent [submission](#) to the Strategic Examination of Research and Development, we highlighted TAFE's capability and signposted the latent potential that exists within TAFEs to expand and develop this capability. We also underlined the contribution that TAFEs can make to Australia's research ecosystem by leveraging the existing expertise of TAFE educators and its well-established industry relationships.

Unfortunately, much TAFE research is unfunded, and while the impact and benefits of TAFE applied research may be experienced immediately due to the rapid transferability of results to industry practice, further dissemination and promotion of impact and outcomes for TAFE-led research is limited without supporting funding. The policies and structures which frame

funding guidelines are often prohibitive to TAFE due to ineligibility or restricted eligibility. For example, in funded research proposals (including ARC proposals), TAFE partners are most often recruited by universities to demonstrate stakeholder involvement, to leverage the industry current skills and connections that TAFE is well known for, to recruit TAFE students or staff as participants, or to utilise specialised TAFE facilities. However, TAFE's involvement in such proposals is limited to 'in-kind' support, which constrains and devalues TAFE's contribution. Without funding to support the work conducted by TAFE personnel, individuals frequently carry the burden of research with the reward limited to non-financial personal development.

Our advocacy in relation to applied research in TAFE calls for:

1. Formal recognition of TAFE's capability and value in Australia's research and development ecosystem;
2. Targeted funding for TAFEs only, to seed research and to support the development of essential infrastructure and capability;
3. Continued support for TAFE Centres of Excellence; and
4. Revision of the National Competitive Grants program to support TAFE applications for research grants.

Thank you for considering this submission. Please contact me at [ceo@tda.edu.au](mailto:ceo@tda.edu.au) if there are any aspects you wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Dodd', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

**JENNY DODD**

Chief Executive Officer

TAFE Directors Australia