

**Record of Australian eResearch Infrastructure Council (AeRIC) Meeting  
Wednesday 1 October 2008  
Sebel & Citigate Hotel, Melbourne**

**Attendees**

**AeRIC**

Professor Tom Cochrane (Chair)  
Ms Anne-Marie Lansdown  
Dr Rhys Francis  
Ms Cathrine Harboe-Ree  
Mr Alan McMeekin  
Professor Robin Stanton  
Dr Robert Woodcock  
Professor Iain Wallace  
Mr Chris Hancock

**DIISR**

Ms Clare McLaughlin  
Mr Peter Nicholson  
Ms Mardi Jordan

**Guests**

Professor Lindsay Botten  
Dr Ross Wilkinson

**Item 1 – Welcome**

The Chair (Professor Cochrane) welcomed members to the meeting. He also welcomed Professor Lindsay Botten (Director of the National Computational Infrastructure project). While all the directors of PFC activities were invited to participate in the meeting, the remainder were unable to attend due to competing commitments. Dr Ross Wilkinson (ANDS) joined the meeting later that morning.

**Item 2 – Discussion of feedback received during the eResearch Forum**

AeRIC discussed the feedback provided during the eResearch forum. A summary of the questions raised during the forum, and the discussion of each, is provided at Attachment A.

Members reported that feedback received from conference delegates following the forum had been positive. On this basis, AeRIC members agreed that the forum should be conducted again next year.

**Item 3 - Update on the review of the National Innovation System**

Ms Lansdown updated AeRIC members on the recently released report on the Review of the National Innovation System (NIS), *Venturous Australia – Building Strength in Innovation* ([www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview](http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview)). She indicated that work completed towards the review of the NCRIS Roadmap had proved extremely useful and provided a strong basis for input to the NIS review.

**Action:**

- DIISR to forward AeRIC members copies of the NIS review summary publication out of session.

## **Item 4 – Other business**

### *4a) Actions arising and minutes of the August meeting*

AeRIC members endorsed the August meeting minutes as an accurate record and noted the status of the actions arising.

Following some discussion on the style of the minutes, AeRIC members agreed that in future the published record of AeRIC meetings should simply reflect a brief summary of the meeting. DIISR agreed to summarise the previous meeting minutes accordingly and to circulate to AeRIC prior to publication on the Pfc website.

#### **Action:**

- DIISR to summarise the August meeting minutes and circulate to AeRIC.

### *4b) Update on the Australian Access Federation (AAF)*

Dr Francis indicated that a special meeting of the AAF Steering Committee had been scheduled for the following day (2 October 2008). The meeting was arranged to progress agreement on the acceleration of the establishment of the Federation and to agree a process to develop a statement of purpose.

## **Item 5 – Next meeting**

It was proposed that the next meeting of AeRIC be held in Canberra in mid November 2008. It was proposed that if possible, the meeting would be scheduled to overlap with the NCRIS Capabilities Meeting to be held on 13 and 14 November. DIISR undertook to forward AeRIC further details on the NCRIS roundtable.

#### **Action:**

- DIISR to forward AeRIC members details of the NCRIS Capabilities Meeting in Canberra.

## **Attachment A**

### **Issues raised at the eResearch Forum**

#### **1. Skills**

The eResearch Coordination Committee (eRCC) report recommended strategies for improving the eResearch skills of researchers, yet no funding was identified for this purpose. While funds for specific skills development recommendations were not forthcoming, the recommendations of the eRCC were instrumental in supporting the NCRIS PfC Investment Plan.

More than half of the PfC budget is being spent on skills and specific PfC components, such as ANDS, ARCS and NCI are aiming to address skills transfer and training. There is scope for the development of an overall strategy to address skills transfer and skill development consistently across the PfC components.

#### **2. Secure access to government data**

Significant volumes of data reside in government domains around Australia. There is an urgent need for AARNet to connect to these repositories and for the AAF to provide appropriate authentication and authorisation services to assist state and territory government agencies to make their data more accessible.

AARNet has a priority to connect to government agencies, but state governments are reluctant to do so. CAUDIT and the Regional Network Organisations (RNOs) are attempting to engage with government agencies in an attempt to address some of the issues.

#### **3. Implications of full funding of the costs of research**

The suggestion that the full costs of research be funded raises the issue of the means of funding underpinning infrastructure. For example, would NCRIS fully funded infrastructure see computer rooms funded as well as the compute facility? The concept of fully funded research is subject to further deliberation by government.

#### **4. Sustainability of PfC services post-NCRIS**

Should there be no further funding beyond the current term of NCRIS, there may, nevertheless, continue to be support from some State governments for services such as ARCS. However, a lack of Commonwealth funding would significantly compromise MARCS' ability to argue for State government funding across the board.

#### **5. Negative drift of skills development**

With the establishment of the PfC and the need to drive the funding further, there has been a noticeable decrease in resources to provide user support, particularly in the case of NCI. In the case of NCI, the move to actively seek co-investments in HPC may provide the necessary resources to address this trend. Better collaboration between senior academic and services groups within universities might also lead to improved user support.

#### **6. PfC benefits for entry level researchers**

There is a need to promote eResearch activities and services to better address the needs of entry level researchers

## **7. NCRIS silos**

NCRIS capabilities tend to be silos with little interaction between the capabilities. It is to be hoped that Pfc will play a key role in breaking down these silos by providing services across the capabilities. The capabilities are weak in describing how Pfc can help them. Consequently, Pfc will need to be pro-active in collaborating with the capabilities.

## **8. Consistent promotion of eResearch**

It is difficult to promote eResearch consistently across disciplines. In addition, to the promotion of the individual Pfc capabilities, it would be useful to develop an overarching eResearch communications strategy.

## **9. Need for coordination of education programs**

Following the cessation of APAC there is a need to better coordinate education activities across the states and territories. This is an issue that should be referred to ARCS.

## **10. eResearch and the Humanities**

While a number of the science disciplines are early adopters of eResearch, promotion of the benefits of eResearch to the humanities and social sciences has been patchy. It may be useful to target the learned academies as well as the universities and research agencies.

## **11. Seamless access to resources and collaboration services**

There is a need to secure seamless access to research data whether held by governments, universities or research agencies. State governments have concerns about the security of their data and issues surrounding the cost of making some data more readily accessible. The establishment of the AAF has the potential to generate a higher level of trust between data owners.

## **12. Timing of eResearch Australasia and the eResearch Forum**

eResearch Australasia was regarded as an opportune venue to conduct the eResearch Forum, but the timing of eResearch Australasia should be set to avoid clashes with other conferences likely to attract those interested in eResearch.

## **13. The National Innovation System**

The NIS Review recommended a revised governance structure to coordinate investments in research infrastructure. Should the Government accept such a recommendation, it will be necessary to build on lessons learned through the NCRIS process.

## **14. eResearch and early career researchers**

In addition to eResearch Australasia, there may also be a case for holding a range of mini conferences around the states to address the needs of entry level researchers. It would also be helpful to better coordinate communications and activities across the Pfc. For example, summer workshops for young researchers and students might provide an early introduction of eResearch capabilities and tools.

### **15. The PfC vision**

There is an overall need to better communicate the PfC vision across research communities. This could be achieved through a strategy to communicate this vision through galleries of exemplars and champions in various disciplines. In addition to running eResearch conferences, it would also be useful to present on eResearch at discipline specific conferences. It might also be useful to identify one or more projects which would involve all of the PfC components.