

## AUSTRALIAN E-RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL (AeRIC)

AeRIC MEETING – 31 AUGUST 2007

### AGENDA ITEM 6: AUSTRALIAN ACCESS FEDERATION (AAF)

#### Purpose

To allow the Council to:

1. become familiar with the issues facing the AAF; and
2. decide on any actions it might undertake or recommend to aid in the implementation and uptake of the AAF in the higher education sector.

#### Issues

The AAF is a project currently being funded by DEST through the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative to design and implement a system that allows those in the higher education sector to use a single sign-on to access resources at both their home institution and institutions with which they collaborate or share resources (see Attachment). DEST is of the view that once established in the higher education sector, the AAF has the potential to spread to other sectors.

The AAF has been identified as an essential element in the effective and efficient roll-out of research infrastructure under NCRIS. Critically, the successful implementation and uptake of the AAF requires that, as well as the technical elements, the cultural, legal and organisational aspects of nation-wide system are addressed. Recognising this, the Council asked that a presentation on AAF be arranged which covered:

- Current status and project timeframes;
- Issues in moving to production, particularly;
  - the main obstacles, by priority
  - how the AAF 'technology' would mesh with technology at institutions adopting the AAF
  - social and rule-making issues
- How the AAF is planning to engage decision makers, particularly;
  - in universities
  - in the NCRIS capabilities (authorisation to use research infrastructure)
  - in ICI for (authorisation to use ICI grid tools/services)
  - in other institutions such as CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology, GeoScience Australia, etc.

DEST has arranged for Mr Nick Tate to give this presentation to AeRIC from 10:00 – 10:30 am. Mr Tate will be joined by Professor James Dalziel.

The Attachment provides further information on the AAF.

#### Action

That AeRIC consider what further actions might be taken to aid the implementation of the AAF.

AeRIC Secretariat

August 2007

## THE AUSTRALIAN ACCESS FEDERATION (AAF) PROJECT

### Background

The AAF project is managed by the University of Queensland (UQ) with funding of \$4.8 million from the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative (SII). It is built on the outcomes of the existing SII-funded e-Security Framework project<sup>1</sup> (based at UQ) and the MAMS project<sup>2</sup> (Meta Access Management System), based at Macquarie University).

The AAF is an integrated part of the Platforms for Collaboration (PfC) under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), expected to provide services critical to the inter-operation of multiple enterprise infrastructures, supporting verifiable researcher identification, home based log-in (so-called *Single Sign On*), and community wide authorities and rights. Once established, the AAF will provide the means of allowing a member institution to trust the information it receives from another member so that access to resources and secure communication can be conducted seamlessly, in a way that will support effective collaboration between users. This collaboration will be both between member institutions and also with users in other federations with which the AAF will be peered.

The AAF project's main objective is to establish the AAF and progressively roll out the AAF production-level services by the end of December 2008. The project has three linked components:

1. development of overarching governance and policies
2. development of specific policies, technical implementation and rollout of PKI; and
3. development of specific policies, technical implementation and rollout of Shibboleth.

The AAF project is governed by a Steering Committee comprising:

- Nick Tate, Chair (The University of Queensland)
- James Dalziel (Macquarie University)
- Chris Marlin (Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Research, Flinders University)
- Andrew Cheetham (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, University of Western Sydney)
- Rhys Francis (Australian e-Research Infrastructure Council (AeRIC))
- Michael Dupe' (Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO))
- Richard Northam (Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT))
- Maxine Brodie (Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL))
- Alan Bevan (The Learning Federation)
- Clare McLaughlin (Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST))
- Viviani Paz (Australian Computer Emergency Response Team (AusCERT) - AAF Project Manager)

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<sup>1</sup> e-Security Framework for Research project seeks to leverage off existing work in two different security systems, namely PKI and Shibboleth; establish an e-Security framework and platform which integrates PKI and Shibboleth and builds on the advantages of each system; and foster collaboration and enable the secure sharing of resources and research infrastructure within Australia and with international partners.

<sup>2</sup> Meta Access Management System project is developing a technical infrastructure that allows institutions to share their valuable content (papers, datasets, audio and video) and services (support, equipment) which need protection with trusted partners within a federation.

The project is coordinating three working groups to obtain inputs from the higher education and research communities:

1. *auEduPerson working group* is tasked with drafting and recommending data attributes for use with the AAF, based on the community's requirements and on interoperability with other key federations.
2. *Grid working group* is tasked with providing expert support and advice to the AAF project team to ensure that the solution proposed by AAF meets the expectation of the Grid community and the wider higher education and research sector, while maintaining compatibility with international Grids such as the IGTF.
3. *Levels of Assurance working group* is tasked with providing expert support and advice to the AAF project team to ensure that the identification, authentication and authorisation levels of assurance implemented under the AAF are suitable and adhere to international implementation, as to not exclude AAF from participating in the international environment.

More information is available at the AAF website: <http://www.aaf.edu.au/index.html>

### **Progress to date**

The UQ has contracted AusCERT to develop the first 2 components and has contracted Macquarie University to develop the third component.

The Steering Committee met three times on 23 March, 26 June and 2 August 2007 discussing governance issues and reviewed progress of e-Security Framework and MAMS projects as the AAF project is tightly linked to the outcomes of the e-Security Framework and MAMS projects.

Following its 2 August 2007 meeting, the Steering Committee is working towards governance arrangements with the likely outcome to be the formation of some form of entity with a governing Board. This concept is to be explored through consultation within the Higher Education community and through legal advice. The needs of the Schools and VET sectors are acknowledged but the immediate focus is on the Higher Education community. Complementary 'nodes' for governance of the AAF for the other two sectors are seen as likely.

The Steering Committee also agreed to explore the possibility of forming an operational arm for the AAF which would leverage off the expertise in AusCERT (University of Queensland), MELCOE (Macquarie University) and AARNet.