

AUSTRALIAN E-RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL (AeRIC)

AeRIC MEETING – 31 AUGUST 2007

AGENDA ITEM 8: AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORK

Purpose

- To introduce a DEST proposal for the establishment of an expert group to advise AeRIC, DEST and AARNet Pty Ltd (APL) on the specific network needs of non-member researchers, including network pricing issues.

Issue

The Platforms for Collaboration (PfC) Investment Plan clearly articulated the centrality of an underpinning high bandwidth telecommunications network to the progress of NCRIS and as a foundational element of the PfC capability. The importance of a network capable of transmitting large amounts of research and research-related data quickly, thus enabling data intensive research activities, is clear.

The Australian Government has supported the development of such a dedicated network, the Australian Research and Education Network (AREN), operated by APL. The overall objective has been to establish an advanced network at minimum cost, in a sustainable way while allowing fair access.

The availability of this network capacity is essential for the quality of research conducted in Australia, particularly in relation to the NCRIS programme but also elsewhere. While the NCRIS PfC Investment Plan did not make significant new investment in the AREN, a small amount was allocated to meet existing commitments on the AARNet infrastructure to maintain the services to Darwin.

Future funding to support the AREN, if required, would most likely need to be secured through the Higher Education Endowment Fund (HEEF) or further funding under the NCRIS programme.

Consideration of the needs of NCRIS and other researchers, particularly those in non-AARNet member institutions, and their expectations of network capability, access and pricing, is needed to optimise the benefits of the AREN for these new customers.

Action

- That AeRIC consider DEST's proposal (Attachment A) to establish an expert advisory group under AeRIC to provide advice to APL and stakeholders on the needs of the research community, and specifically on impacts to network pricing.

In considering this proposal, AeRIC may wish to consider:

- NCRIS, PfC and AeRIC stake in this issue;
- Its collective views on the proposal;
- The draft scope of and plan for the proposed option (Attachment A);
- Governance, membership, resource and timeframe issues.

AeRIC Secretariat
August 2007

Draft Scope and Plan for DEST proposed expert advisory group under AeRIC

Draft Scope

(To be refined into Terms of Reference)

The purpose of the expert advisory group on AREN will include, but not be limited to:

1. refining the view on the AREN-related needs of the research community;
2. ascertaining the range of options for alternative network pricing models for the AREN;
3. recommending a preferred network pricing model congruent with the current and future needs of the NCRIS community and wider research and education sectors;
4. determining and making recommendations on the factors that would facilitate the implementation of the preferred network pricing model by AARNet Pty Ltd (APL) as the operator of the AREN;
5. determining what significant or strategic gaps exist in the current AREN physical infrastructure; and
6. providing advice on the above to AeRIC, DEST and APL.

Membership

Members of the expert advisory group should collectively demonstrate the following characteristics:

- A comprehensive understanding of business modelling in relation to national or major Australian research or higher education oriented information and communications technology (ICT).
- A collegiate approach to this issue and to the research infrastructure needs of NCRIS as a whole.
- A keen understanding of, and/or experience in, network pricing and an appreciation of the issues and challenges facing network operators in a non-commercial environment.
- A preparedness and ability to foster and promote the activities of the expert advisory group, including anticipated outcomes, to the higher education and research community, and to the NCRIS community in particular.

It is anticipated that at least one representative will be drawn from APL. Further members will be affiliated or drawn from APL's membership base and from potential or new customers for the network, including those from the NCRIS community.

The scope of membership will include:

- A Vice-Chancellor
- A Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
- Appropriate nominees from Universities Australia; the Group of Eight, and the Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT);
- Representatives from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Geoscience Australia, the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, and CSIRO.

If this proposal is agreed, DEST will circulate a list of possible members to AeRIC for consideration.

The group would be chaired by Dr Evan Arthur, Group Manager, Innovation and Research Systems Group, DEST.

Attachment A

Advice may be sought, as appropriate, from other key players such as the National Broadband Adviser for Education; the Department of Communications, IT and the Arts; the schools or vocational education and training (VET) sectors.

Consultation

The expert advisory group will be expected to consult with appropriate stakeholders in the higher education and research community, but may also consult with other future or potential stakeholders in the AREN, including other education sectors, as appropriate.

Timeframe

The expert advisory group will be established as soon as possible, following AeRIC's agreement.

The group will be expected to undertake its activities as expediently as possible. An initial timeframe for findings and recommendation to AeRIC is proposed as follows.

Date	Event	Action
31 August	AeRIC meeting	DEST proposal for AeRIC consideration and agreement.
7 September	Out of session consultation with AeRIC on Terms of Reference; Members of expert advisory group; Proposed Chair of group; Process; Consultation; and Timeframes. AeRIC/DEST to advise key stakeholders of proposed activity.	DEST to draft and circulate detailed draft plan for consideration by AeRIC. AeRIC to comment and agree. AeRIC/DEST to write to Vice-Chancellors and other appropriate stakeholders advising of proposed activity.
9 September	Invitations to proposed expert advisory group members	DEST to invite members.
13 Sept	Terms of Reference to be agreed by expert advisory group. Alternative members sought if invitations declined.	DEST to prepare and circulate draft Terms of Reference to membership. DEST to invite additional members if necessary.
Late September	First meeting of expert advisory group. AARNet Advisory Committee meeting 27 September.	DEST to provide secretariat and support papers. DEST to present to AARNet Advisory Committee. Expert advisory group to finalise Terms of Reference and schedule for activity.
Early October	Formal update to APL.	DEST / Chair of expert advisory group to meet with APL.
October	Expert advisory group conducts activities.	Meetings of expert advisory group. Expert advisory group consultation.
26 October	Presentation to AeRIC meeting on preliminary findings.	DEST / Expert advisory group to prepare.

Attachment A

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Action</i>
Mid-November	Expert advisory group findings and recommendations completed.	Expert advisory group prepares report and briefs DEST.
Late 2007	AeRIC considers report. Formal update to APL.	DEST circulates report to AeRIC for consideration. AeRIC provides feedback to DEST and Expert advisory group on report. DEST meets with APL.
Early 2008	Post report implementation.	DEST, AeRIC, APL and /or expert advisory group to implement.