

**AUSTRALIAN E-RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL
AERIC**

**DRAFT RECORD OF MEETING
10 OCTOBER 2007 (Perth)**

Attendees

Council

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

DEST

Ms Clare McLaughlin and Ms Mardi Jordan.

Presentations

- Professor Anthony Williams (SAPAC), Dr Paul Coddington (SAPAC) and colleagues, from the Australian Research Collaboration Service (ARCS) (Items 4 to 7).

Notes:

- The Executive Director's report was suspended to accommodate the presentation by the ARCS representatives and resumed following their departure. This record reflects the order in which items were discussed.
- Actions arising from the meeting are collated in Attachment A.

Agenda Items

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting at 3.40 pm welcoming Council members. He noted that it would be a short meeting featuring presentations from several representatives from the Australian Research Collaboration Service (ARCS) after 4pm.

Agenda Item 2 – Actions Arising from August meeting and Conflicts of Interest

The Chair gave an overview of the Actions Arising from the August meeting. The Council noted that most items had been addressed.

Two action items relating to a follow-up meeting with the Australian Access Federation (AAF) Steering Committee were briefly discussed and further discussion deferred to the Executive Director's report at Agenda Item 3.

Agenda Item 3 – Executive Director’s Report (part 1)

Dr Francis commenced his report on Platforms for Collaboration (PfC) activities by noting that there were some key developments occurring within PfC upon which the Council may wish to take a view.

Interoperation and Collaboration Infrastructure/ARCS

Dr Francis provided a summary of activities under the Interoperation and Collaboration Infrastructure (ICI) component, noting that the project has been incorporated into the wider Australian Research Collaboration Service (ARCS). He noted that the ICI Implementation Plan has been provided to DEST, and copied to AeRIC members for information, and that it represents significant progress.

He noted that several participants may not be in a position to sign the ARCS Collaboration Agreement, which is required to be submitted to DEST by 30 October 2007. The Chair noted that given the ARCS representatives would be in the room later in the meeting, the Council should ask them to address these issues in person. The Council returned to this issue later in the meeting.

National Computational Infrastructure (NCI)

Dr Francis noted that an Interim Implementation Plan had been provided to DEST for the NCI component, and copied to AeRIC members for information.

Professor Stanton noted the requirement that the ANU conduct a merit allocation call as soon as possible and that this process will commit resources into 2008, including for a data component. He noted the dependency that NCI therefore has on developments in the ANDS component.

The Council discussed the issue of the NCI intersection with ANDS. DEST indicated that any elements of the call that were associated with assisting researchers with their data, and not data storage, should be discussed in conjunction with ANDS.

Dr Francis noted that the intersection of ANDS, NCI and ARCS should be flagged for the Council to discuss in future, and that existing work should not stop until these issues have been resolved. The Chair concluded that due to limited time, the Council should consider the NCI component in more detail at the next meeting.

Australian National Data Service (ANDS)

Dr Francis advised the Council that the ANDS Discussion Paper is near final and should be completed following the final meeting of the Technical Working Group in mid October.

He referred to the proposed governance arrangements for ANDS, provided to the Council with the agenda papers, and noted that no further work will progress on governance issues until further talks are held with the proposed bodies.

DEST noted that the discussion paper will eventually serve as a “business specification” for ANDS and implementation details will be brought forward in the business planning process, once a contract with the lead entity is in place.

Dr Francis noted that the paper had been distributed to the wider ANDS Reference Group for comment and had received strong support. He acknowledged the speculation in the community around what ANDS might do and noted it was urgent that an outcome be determined soon.

Dr Francis suggested that bilateral and multilateral discussions be held with the proposed institutions and a proposal brought forward for consideration by AeRIC at its November meeting. The Council agreed to this suggestion.

National Collaborative Network (NCN)

The Council agreed that discussion on the development of the National Collaborative Network (NCN) proposal should be deferred to the November meeting, as a proposal has not yet been finalised. Mr Hancock noted he may be overseas for the next meeting and would see how the proposal progressed in the interim.

The Chair noted that due to a lack of time, the Executive Director’s report would be continued after the ARCS presentations.

Actions

- The Council to consider the NCI in more detail at the November 2007 meeting, including the intersection between the NCI and ANDS.
- The Executive Director to provide an ANDS proposal for consideration by Council at the next meeting.
- The Council to consider the NCN proposal at a future meeting, possibly in November 2007.

Australian Research Collaboration Service (ARCS) presentations

Agenda Item 4 – Overview of ARCS and progress to date

A number of ARCS representatives joined the meeting at Agenda Item 4, to provide presentations focusing on the ICI component of ARCS. The Chair invited Professor Anthony Williams, ARCS Interim Executive Director, to provide AeRIC with a short overview of the ARCS collaboration and progress to date.

Professor Williams outlined the ARCS collaboration structure noting that it builds on the APAC foundations and has a wider organisational structure and flexible arrangements for changing regional providers.

He noted the key milestones for the ICI project, including the ICI Implementation Plan that had been submitted to DEST and the ARCS Collaboration Agreement, which is still in development. Professor Williams noted there were some challenges

experienced in the negotiation of the Agreement, particularly in securing the signatures of certain organisations.

The Chair requested that the ARCS attendees detail the background associated with these challenges. Professor Bernard Pailthorpe (QCIF) responded that in the case of QCIF, it consists of a consortium of universities and the nature of the relationship between the universities and QCIF has led to several complications in QCIF's participation in ARCS.

Agenda Item 5 - ICI Implementation Plan

The Chair then invited Dr Paul Coddington, the ARCS Associate Director, to provide the AeRIC members with an overview of the ICI Implementation Plan.

Dr Coddington emphasised that in contrast with APAC, ICI has more of an emphasis on data and collaboration tools, and has a particular focus on engagement with NCRIS.

Dr Coddington outlined the key activities to be carried out during the ICI implementation period. These include a particular focus on data (storage, access, movement and support data processing) and an undertaking to build this capability across all sites, to provide support at multiple sites for federated requirements. He outlined the key milestones listed in the Plan, which relate to collaboration and portal services, user support and data services.

He noted that the NCRIS ICI funding contains an element of NeAT funding, and to date, several "Proto-NeAT" projects have been carried out. He noted that the next round of these projects would be determined in several weeks.

Ms Harboe-Ree congratulated the ARCS representatives on their plans to establish a data specialist networks and indicated that consistency across partners will prove an effective communications network for ANDS.

Agenda Item 6 - ARCS Collaboration Agreement and communications strategy

The Chair indicated that a presentation on the Collaboration Agreement was no longer required, as the Council had been provided with a copy of the draft Agreement. He then invited Professor Williams to provide an overview of the communications and engagement strategy in ICI.

Professor Williams outlined how an ARCS website will be developed and additional consultations with NCRIS capability areas conducted. He also detailed how ARCS will conduct research training courses and user forums and noted liaison efforts with regional and international affiliates.

Agenda Item 7 – Discussion with ARCS team

The Chair commenced the group discussion by noting that accountability in all Platforms for Collaboration programs will be important, and he questioned the extent to which the services produced can be directly associated with the NCRIS investment.

He indicated that metrics should be in place to enable ARCS to report on progress and demonstrate how the ICI investment strategy is being achieved.

The ARCS representatives noted that the current focus of effort has been on the development of the Implementation Plan, and the Collaboration Agreement. It would be expected that metrics would be developed for the 2008 Business Plan.

In response to a question about how the Council would measure success, the Chair noted that while this was the third meeting of the Council he expects that during 2008 the Council will form a more concrete view about what will be considered success under the program. He reiterated that accountability and engagement with the user community would be key to determining the success of the project.

Dr Francis noted that the Implementation Plan is a comprehensive document and that it represents significant progress. He indicated that it would be necessary to prioritise the list of proposed application services as it would be important to do a small number of activities well.

Professor Williams highlighted some issues of overlapping services in relation to the AAF which, like ARCS, might also provide some collaboration services. Dr Francis indicated that AeRIC may play a role in relation to overlapping activities of concern across Pfc.

The Chair concluded the discussion by noting that it would be necessary to identify the specific outcomes of the ICI component of ARCS activities. He also noted that it will be important to consider how success is measured. He noted that these are issues that should be considered in the subsequent development of ARCS.

The Chair thanked the guests for their presentations.

Agenda Item 8 - AeRIC discussion on ARCS - interaction with Pfc and NCRIS capabilities

Mr Hancock noted that the question to the Council about its measures for success was a good one. He suggested it was worth AeRIC reflecting on its development as a Council, and considering how to communicate what it is expecting from the Capability areas.

Dr Francis indicated that if the resource owners use ARCS to access resources, then it is a success. He indicated that further issues should be dealt with in the business planning process.

DEST indicated that AeRIC should communicate that it accepts the Implementation Plan and note that as part of the business planning cycle there will be a need to clarify these further issues.

Dr Francis also suggested that the Council reflect on the Collaboration Agreement deadline of 30 October 2007 and suggested that ARCS could possibly progress to signature and accommodate a late signature from any remaining parties so that the collaboration can begin the development of the annual business plan.

Dr Francis moved for the Council to encourage ARCS to finalise the Collaboration Agreement, with signatures from those entities that are in a position to do so, by the DEST deadline.

The Chair concluded that there should be an immediate communication from the Council, generally indicating the Council's favourable impression of activities, and the Council agreed it was important for ARCS to press ahead with the signing of the Collaboration Agreement providing a sufficient number of members are able to.

The Executive Director also suggested that AeRIC recommend to DEST that it accept the Implementation Plan. The Council agreed to this approach and DEST noted AeRIC's support for the Plan.

Actions

- The Chair to write to ARCS thanking them for the presentation, noting AeRIC's support for the Implementation Plan and encouraging them to progress towards signing the Collaboration Agreement.

The Chair then indicated that the meeting would return to the Executive Director's report.

Agenda Item 3 – Executive Director's Report (part 2)

NeAT

Dr Francis indicated that while it took some time to establish NeAT, he is confident that a strong group of people had been selected for the Taskforce.

He explained that there has been a change in focus on how to proceed with NeAT, following the first full day meeting. The original focus on next generation services was considered too bold as there are not currently adequate tools that could be classed as the first generation. NeAT will therefore focus on demonstrating value by identifying and addressing the next steps in eResearch capability.

NeAT will conduct some work before the end of the year on what can be done in this area and will present this to AeRIC. Proposals will be developed in conjunction with the ARCS and ANDS business planning processes and in close collaboration with the NCRIS capabilities.

AAF

Both the Chair and Dr Francis noted concerns with current progress on the AAF, particularly in details relating to the governance arrangements.

Dr Francis noted that a number of implementation questions, governance included, will be difficult to resolve until the appointment of an AAF operator is finalised. He indicated that it was possible that a new entity may need to be created.

The Council agreed that it will be important that final governance arrangements are scalable to incorporate other sectors as they mature, such as schools and VET institutions as well as other organisations that hold major data repositories.

The Chair noted concerns that there appears to be a current lack of certainty about how the AAF will intersect with other components in the Platforms for Collaboration capability, and the wider NCRIS community. He also mentioned that engagement with the higher education sector to date seems to have been focused on technical implementation issues, rather than on engagement with university administrations.

The Chair proposed that he write a letter to Nick Tate and the AAF Steering Committee, on behalf of AeRIC, requesting a meeting between the AeRIC Chair, the Executive Director and Nick Tate, as the Chair of the AAF Steering Committee. The Council agreed with this approach.

Actions

- The Chair to write to the Chair of the AAF Steering Committee, highlighting AeRIC's concerns with the project implementation and requesting a meeting between the AeRIC Chair, the AeRIC Executive Director and the AAF SC Chair, at the first available opportunity.

Other business

The Chair noted that at future meetings, he would like to see the Council engage with research agencies, such as the Australian Research Council, to encourage collaborative behaviour in grant recipients. The Council agreed to this approach and considered this process should commence in 2008.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 20 November 2007, from 10.30-4.00pm, at the Hilton Melbourne Airport Hotel (Ballarine Room). This meeting will focus on ANDS, NCI, AAF and possibly the NCN.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Attachment A - Actions Arising

- The Council to consider the NCI in more detail at the November 2007 meeting, including the intersection between the NCI and ANDS.
- The Executive Director to provide an ANDS proposal for consideration by Council at the next meeting.
- The Council to consider the NCN proposal at a future meeting, possibly in November 2007.
- The Chair to write to ARCS thanking them for the presentation, noting AeRIC's support for the Implementation Plan and encouraging them to progress towards signing the Collaboration Agreement.
- The Chair to write to the Chair of the AAF Steering Committee, highlighting AeRIC's concerns with the project implementation and requesting a meeting between the AeRIC Chair, the AeRIC Executive Director and the AAF SC Chair, at the first available opportunity.