



Australian Government

**Department of Innovation
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*Copy to: Dr Rhys Francis, Executive Director, AeRIC
And Members of AeRIC*

Dear Professor Cochrane

AeRIC review of Platforms for Collaboration Business Plans and Reports

The NCRIS program features an annual planning and review process for all funded activities, which includes the provision of yearly Annual Business Plans in approximately March of each year and the provision of an annual Progress Report in September each year.

I am writing to you to seek AeRIC's assistance in reviewing the Annual Business Plans, and in subsequent meetings the Progress Reports, provided to me by the various components of the NCRIS Platforms for Collaboration (Pfc) Capability.

Each NCRIS Pfc funding agreement states that DIISR will consider each Annual Business Plan, and, taking into account advice received from the NCRIS Committee and AeRIC, approve the Annual Business Plan or negotiate changes to the content. The involvement of AeRIC in this arrangement also reflects the NCRIS Committee decision to establish AeRIC to "oversight investments in (the) three major components (of Platforms for Collaboration)" and related statements made in the AeRIC Operational Framework.

As you would recall, AeRIC previously assisted with the consideration of the Implementation Plans for the Interoperation and Collaboration Infrastructure (ICI) and the National Computational Infrastructure (NCI) components. The official reporting period for NCRIS Annual Business Plans has concluded and it is now necessary to consider and review the submitted plans for these two components.

An internal assessment of the Annual Business Plans will be carried out by the NCRIS team giving particular consideration to:

- the required content for Annual Business Plans and Progress Reports, as specified in the funding agreement;
- the alignment with the previous Annual Business Plan (for progress reports only);
- the alignment with the capability investment plan as approved by NCRIS; and
- the degree to which any variations might represent a change requiring re-appraisal by NCRIS.

In addition, the Pfc Capability has several unique aspects requiring further consideration. The NCRIS Committee and the NCRIS communities have identified the Pfc capability, and eResearch more widely, as a foundational element underpinning NCRIS activities. Therefore a key question concerns the degree to which the Plans and Reports provided demonstrate this foundational positioning, and it is this question on which I would seek AeRIC's view.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your agreement to formalise the arrangement under which AeRIC will, in the first instance, consider at its meeting on 29 May 2008 the two Annual Business Plans that have been provided to DIISR so far, and will continue to do so for future Pfc Annual Business Plans, and Progress Reports. To this end, I have asked the Secretariat to plan AeRIC meetings around the assessment cycle for these Plans and Reports.

In seeking AeRIC's view on the ICI and NCI Business Plans to inform my decision on whether to approve the Annual Business Plans, I believe it would be most productive if AeRIC could comment on the following three aspects which, as a foundational capability, Pfc should seek to demonstrate, as well as any other aspects of significance:

- The degree to which the Pfc infrastructure and services are being tailored to meet the needs of NCRIS researchers as well as participants in other research activities
- The extent to which the Pfc infrastructure and services are being utilised across NCRIS capabilities and other research activities
- Evidence that common services can be and are being used to harness resources and expertise to achieve research goals not otherwise attainable.

I have separately asked the Executive Director of AeRIC to provide a paper outlining his initial thoughts to assist the Council in its consideration of the ICI and NCI Annual Business Plans at the Council meeting on 29 May 2008, and I have also copied this letter to Dr Francis.

The NCRIS Team will also provide AeRIC with a summary of its internal assessments prior to the meeting.

Yours sincerely



Anne-Marie Lansdown

General Manager

Research Infrastructure Branch

21 May 2008