

**Record of Australian eResearch Infrastructure Council (AeRIC) Meeting  
Tuesday 5 August  
AusIndustry Offices, Melbourne**

**Attendees**

**AeRIC**

Professor Tom Cochrane (Chair)  
Dr Rhys Francis  
Ms Cathrine Harboe-Ree  
Mr Alan McMeekin  
Professor Robin Stanton  
Dr Robert Woodcock

**DIISR**

Ms Mardi Jordan

**Apologies**

Professor Iain Wallace  
Mr Chris Hancock  
Ms Anne-Marie Lansdown (DIISR)

**Item 1 – Welcome**

The Chair (Professor Cochrane) opened the meeting at 10am and welcomed members. He noted apologies had been received from Professor Wallace, Mr Hancock and Ms Lansdown.

**Item 2 – Actions arising from May 2008 meeting**

The Chair listed the actions arising from the previous meeting and noted that Dr Francis would speak to the actions concerning the Australian Access Federation (AAF) at Item 6, "Implementation of the AAF". He called for the members to confirm the minutes from the May meeting as a true and accurate record, to which the Council agreed.

**Item 3 – Update on the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) Roadmap Review**

The Chair invited Dr Francis to lead the discussion on the NCRIS Roadmap Review, in Ms Lansdown's absence.

Dr Francis opened by noting the efforts of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) in conducting a thorough review process, within a short timeframe. He indicated he was confident that all submissions received had been considered and noted that the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Hon Kim Carr, had publicly endorsed the process.

Dr Francis presented the draft eResearch Chapter of the revised roadmap to the Council. As the Chair of the NCRIS Roadmap Review ICT Strategy Group, he highlighted the emphasis in that chapter on eResearch as an enabler of brand new methods of research.

Several members commented on the governance section of the draft chapter and highlighted a possible role for AeRIC in providing advice to Government on the proposed arrangements. Following discussion, it was noted that governance arrangements are currently subject to discussion and that AeRIC should await the

maturity of these issues before engaging on the topic. Dr Francis indicated that regardless of structure, the agreed governance should provide a degree of coherence not present across current research infrastructure investments.

Ms Harboe-Ree commented on the expression of the related roles of the Australian Research Collaboration Service (ARCS) and the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) in the chapter. Mr McMeekin also raised some concerns with the expression of issues involving the interaction of eResearch services with on-campus IT arrangements. Dr Francis indicated that the chapter had been deliberately pitched at a level above Platforms for Collaboration (PfC) specific investments to capture all future eResearch activity, in a truly national sense.

Following discussion of the draft chapter, the members noted an ongoing requirement for research facility owners and NCRIS capabilities to better focus on their eResearch needs. It was acknowledged that some researchers struggle to understand the potential uses of ICT in their activities and are not well informed on how to leverage PfC services. This discussion was deferred to the consideration of the AeRIC Communications Plan, at item 4 of the agenda.

Professor Stanton suggested that AeRIC could build upon the work carried out in the NCRIS Roadmap Review, and facilitate an ongoing assessment of eResearch requirements across NCRIS capabilities. Dr Francis suggested AeRIC could ask the NCRIS Committee to consider such an approach and Professor Stanton agreed to put together a proposal and circulate to members for discussion.

Dr Woodcock noted that the skills development issue is of key importance and requires greater emphasis in the text. Dr Francis expressed a view that institutions have a clear role to play in relation to skills development, and Ms Jordan indicated that the issue is complex as responsibility for this area crosses a number of Government portfolios. Dr Francis noted that some time ago the NCRIS Committee had formed a view that it was not possible to address the skills issue comprehensively with the NCRIS funding. He indicated that the skills issue is a question for the NCRIS Committee.

The Chair brought the discussion to a close.

#### **Action**

- Professor Stanton to propose strategies by which NCRIS and PfC could better engage capabilities on eResearch issues.

#### **Item 4 - AeRIC Communications Plan**

Professor Cochrane asked Dr Francis to speak to the AeRIC Communications Plan, as presented with the agenda papers.

Dr Francis indicated that the Communications Plan is intended to provide some high level common messages and to also document and coordinate messages across PfC activities.

He indicated that the messages in the document have been developed for high level communications, and primarily to communicate the value of eResearch and the requirement to continue support for current activities. He noted that more targeted messages for individual audiences would be the focus of communication plans at the individual PfC activity level.

Professor Cochrane indicated there is a need to intensify the communications efforts, following AeRIC's previous advice to the Australian Research Collaboration Service (ARCS) and the National Computational Infrastructure (NCI) directors, in response to the first NCRIS Annual Business Plans. He suggested that the Council should comment on the individual PfC activity communications plans to identify deficits in messages or overlap and to provide advice to DIISR that these are in place and are being monitored.

Members noted that the Plan requires a different focus to that of the component plans, and agreed that it should focus on the impact of eResearch, regardless of the specific PfC investment through which the value might originate.

Members discussed the focus of communications, noting that some emphasis should be directed towards researchers and resource owners as being co-contributors to eResearch infrastructure, as well as seeking a change in behaviour across researchers and resource owners.

Dr Francis highlighted the need for the directors of PfC components to better understand each PfC activity, and suggested an internal discussion between directors to ensure that each PfC service delivers consistent messages.

Following discussion, Professor Cochrane concluded that Dr Francis would provide a revised communications plan for distribution to Council members. He indicated that sometime in the future it would be necessary to hold a workshop on communication issues with the various PfC component directors.

#### Action

- Dr Francis to refine the AeRIC Communication Plan to focus on the overview for eResearch, including the inter-relationship between the PfC components, and the key over-arching messages to be addressed in the PfC component communication plans.

#### **Item 5 - Executive Director's Report**

Professor Cochrane invited Dr Francis to provide the Council with an update on PfC activities. Dr Francis spoke to the agenda paper as provided to the Committee, and to the written updates as provided by the directors of ARCS and NCI.

#### *ARCS/ICI*

Dr Francis indicated that ARCS is continuing to harden its services and is nearing the completion of the transition from the handover from the Australian Partnership for Advanced Computing (APAC). Dr Francis tabled a written update from the ARCS

Executive Director and noted that ARCS is making progress against the Collaboration's objectives.

He also reported that the Queensland Cyber Infrastructure Foundation (QCIF) has recently joined ARCS and it is expected that the NSW Institute for Transdisciplinary eResearch Services and Technology (INTERSECT) will also join.

He noted that there is an intention to engage an independent chair of the ARCS Executive Committee. Professor Cochrane supported this approach noting that it is consistent with the approach to steering committees across PFC.

Dr Francis also spoke to a list of proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) presented as part of his report. He indicated that the document follows on from discussions at the May meeting of AeRIC on the ARCS Annual Business Plan. He indicated that the KPIs are intended to support a strategic focus to future ARCS services.

Following discussion, Professor Cochrane suggested that it might be useful to consider the objectives as outlined in the NCRIS contract as a basis for the KPIs. Dr Francis agreed, and noted that he would provide advice back to AeRIC at the next meeting, following discussion with ARCS. He noted that the September NCRIS progress report for ARCS should seek to provide an overview of progress against these indicators and aim to provide a more comprehensive measurement in 2009.

#### *ANDS*

Dr Francis noted that the timeframes under the ANDS Establishment Project had been amended by variation to the NCRIS Agreement. The amendment has been made to provide additional time to undertake consultation on the draft business plan and to finalise collaboration arrangements. He indicated that the selection process for an ANDS Executive Director is underway and that interviews would be held soon.

He noted that feedback received during consultations has been positive and has endorsed the direction outlined in the draft business plan. He reported that it is clear that the ANDS stakeholder community now desires the full implementation of ANDS.

He also indicated that the notion of an independent chair of the ANDS Steering Committee was still under discussion but that it was likely to be resolved soon.

#### *NCI*

Dr Francis noted that progress had accelerated on the NCI since the appointment of Professor Lindsay Botten as the Director. Since his appointment, fruitful discussions have been undertaken with potential co-investors, including CSIRO and Geoscience Australia. There is also an expectation that the current tender process for the new peak facility will close with a purchase and a request for expressions of interest in specialised systems has now been issued.

Professor Cochrane stated that the reports provided by the Professors Williams and Botten were useful. He suggested that Dr Francis should reply to the ARCS Executive

Director and the NCI Director, acknowledging these reports and indicating that it would be a useful activity to continue for future AeRIC meetings.

#### *eResearch Australasia*

Dr Francis noted that the eResearch Australasia conference is scheduled to be held in Melbourne from 29 September to 2 October. He noted that several hundred attendees were expected and that workshops are also planned on ANDS, NCI and ARCS during the conference. The AeRIC eResearch forum was further discussed at Item 8.

#### **Action**

- Dr Francis to refine proposed ARCS KPIs in consultation with the Executive Director of ARCS and to indicate that the September progress report for ARCS should seek to provide an overview of progress against these indicators and aim to provide a more comprehensive measurement in the 2009 progress report.
- Dr Francis to respond to the ARCS Executive Director and the NCI Director thanking them for their report to AeRIC and seeking their continued reports to AeRIC in future (for information only).

#### **Item 6 - Implementation of the AAF**

Dr Francis spoke to his written report to AeRIC and advised the Council that Universities Australia (UA) has agreed to assist in establishing the corporate entity for the AAF and that the UA subsidiary Higher Education Services (HES) will be providing administrative support. Dr Francis noted that the AAF project has decided to invite Professor Williams to join its steering committee, to assist with integrating activities between the AAF and ARCS.

Dr Francis suggested that the development of a clearly articulated business plan should be encouraged as a matter of urgency and that delays with the project may be exacerbated by the absence of a full-time leader for the Federation.

The Council noted concerns regarding the status of the project and future governance and several members noted that concerns about progress had been raised in AeRIC previously.

#### **Action**

- The AAF contract delegate be contacted as appropriate with AeRIC's concerns.

#### **Item 7 - Progress Report on the National eResearch Architecture Taskforce (NeAT)**

Dr Francis spoke to his tabled report on NeAT. He indicated that he is happy with the projects as developed and noted that ARCS and ANDS are working closely with the communities concerned. He reported that a number of projects have highlighted

current unmet demand in related fields and that some projects will therefore have wider application than was originally anticipated.

He noted that there were some criticisms of the process that should be addressed during the second round of funding. He reported that there is a perception that the original process was not "open" and that funded projects were too closely associated with the members of NeAT.

There was some discussion on how to address this issue, including through the establishment of an additional reference group with representation wider than those communities represented on NeAT.

Dr Francis indicated that the next step would be to call for proposals under a second round of NeAT and to publish the previous examples of successful projects. He noted that it will still be important ensure that the proposed service is supported by the research community and that an ongoing service provider must be identified.

He also indicated that the NeAT activity to map the eResearch architecture would commence in earnest after the release of the new Roadmap and following the AeRIC forum at eResearch Australasia.

#### **Item 8 - Other business**

- **Issues for discussion at the AeRIC eResearch Forum @ eResearch Australasia conference**

Dr Francis spoke to this item, indicating that the AeRIC eResearch forum will be a workshop on issues in PFC that will run for several hours at eResearch Australasia. He indicated that there would be efforts to gather attendee questions and issues prior to the meeting, through an email and question box facility at the conference. He noted that the forum should invite the participation of the AAF and AARNet.

AeRIC determined that Professor Cochrane will chair the forum and that Dr Francis should provide an opening presentation to stimulate discussion. This presentation will provide a summary of activities to date, including from the components, indicating what services are currently being delivered, the ongoing challenges and the future eResearch vision. It was agreed the presentation time should be limited and that the focus would be on discussion of key issues.

#### **Item 9 - Next meeting**

The Council agreed to meet in conjunction with the eResearch Australasia Conference. The secretariat agreed to circulate details of the meeting, tentatively scheduled as a short breakfast meeting on 1 October in Melbourne. The proposed focus of the meeting will be the feedback received in the AeRIC eResearch forum.

#### **Action**

- AeRIC Secretariat to circulate details of the October meeting

### Summary of actions arising

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible person</b>
Professor Stanton to propose strategies by which NCRIS and PfC could better engage capabilities on eResearch issues.	Professor Stanton
Dr Francis to refine the AeRIC Communication Plan to focus on the overview for eResearch, including the inter-relationship between the PfC components, and the key over-arching messages to be addressed in the PfC component communication plans	Dr Francis
Dr Francis to refine proposed ARCS KPIs in consultation with the Executive Director of ARCS and to indicate that the September progress report for ARCS should seek to provide an overview of progress against these indicators and aim to provide a more comprehensive measurement in the 2009 progress report.	Dr Francis
Dr Francis to respond to the ARCS Executive Director and the NCI Director thanking them for their report to AeRIC and seeking their continued reports to AeRIC in future (for information only).	Dr Francis
The AAF contract delegate be contacted as appropriate with AeRIC's concerns.	Professor Cochrane (and AeRIC secretariat)
Secretariat to circulate details of the October meeting	AeRIC Secretariat