

2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure: IRU comment

The IRU supports the exposure draft of the 2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure as providing a valuable guide to future areas for research infrastructure investment.

There are five matters on which the IRU wishes to comment to aid in finalising the Roadmap and implementing the National Research Infrastructure Council's broader *Strategic Framework*. These relate to:

- release of the more detailed material the Expert Working Groups developed to underpin the conclusions set out in the Roadmap;
- supporting the focus the Roadmap exposure draft gives to addressing e-research issues collectively in addition to the particular issues raised in each capability area;
- consideration of the workforce required to support effective maintenance and use of major research infrastructure;
- the need for a new research infrastructure initiative following the completion of NCRIS; and
- ensuring support for developing areas of capability.

Release of supporting materials

The process for developing the Roadmap included detailed consideration by Expert Working Groups of the needs of each major area. Much material that was developed for the panels has been omitted from the Roadmap now released to focus on the key areas for action and their rationale. The IRU considers that there is considerable value in the more extensive material to act as a guide to the allocation of new investment should it be approved and to assist discussion among the research communities. Hence the IRU suggests that the Roadmap acknowledge this material with it being released alongside the shorter Roadmap as supporting material and given to those responsible for implementing the Roadmap.

A collective approach to e-research

The IRU strongly supports the inclusion of e-research in the Roadmap framework as an underpinning capability relevant to the effective development of each capability area.

The research infrastructure workforce

The NRIC *Strategic Framework* makes the case for holistic funding, such that infrastructure programs should cover project planning and running costs. In developing the Roadmap it remains crucial to address specifically creating and maintaining the workforce needed to operate and maintain the infrastructure identified.

A new research infrastructure program

In its submission to the NRIC in February 2011 the IRU supported the NRIC case that it is essential to have an ongoing, long term program of investment in research infrastructure that provides both reasonable certainty of investment for the medium to longer term and access for all researchers to the funded infrastructure. In this context, it is crucial that NCRIS is renewed or a new funding scheme implemented to ensure that current infrastructure remains operational and future needs met. This is consistent with the NRIC *Strategic Framework* argument for certainty of funding.

Ensuring support for developing areas of capability

In its comments to NRIC the IRU argued for greater consideration of the long term impact of funding projects tied closely to current national priority areas only. The focus has been important to the success of the various funding programs of the past decade such that Australia has been able to improve research in many key areas of existing or potential strength.

Now that the NCRIS has provided major investment in infrastructure directly tied to the national priorities, a longer term question is how to ensure that there is an effective infrastructure base so that Australia is well positioned to identify and develop new major areas for research as they emerge. Maintaining the breadth of capacity is important to ensuring Australia has the opportunity to pursue areas which become the focus for future growth in ways we cannot now perceive.

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