

Name of Submitter:

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Draft 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap Submission Template

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To whom it may concern

National Research Infrastructure Roadmap Exposure Draft

Dear Sir/Madam

Ref.: Comments by the International Council of Museums Australian Section (ICOM Australia) on *the exposure draft for the National Research Infrastructure Roadmap 2016*

ICOM Australia, as the leading international body representing collecting institutions in Australia welcomes the publication of the exposure draft and the commitment to developing a Roadmap to guide the development of and investment in Research Infrastructure.

We particularly welcome the focus on understanding Culture and Communities and the foregrounding of the Humanities and Social Sciences sector. Despite previous unsuccessful attempts, this appears to be a clear commitment to funding of research in this sector.

The members of the Expert Working Group are to be commended on this synthesis of many different and disparate areas of potential research.



A. General Comments

The four-layered approach is welcome but ICOM Australia, in line with its mission, would welcome an even stronger focus on investment in global research and collaboration. More than ever, there is a need to build international partnerships both to enhance and enrich research capital and capability, but also to build scientific and cultural understanding across borders and boundaries. The benefits of sharing big data, expertise and research initiatives globally need hardly be emphasised and this is a key opportunity to provide infrastructure to facilitate this.

In similar vein, whilst the National Research Infrastructure Principles are sound and creditable, we would hope that they would place greater emphasis on addressing global issues and needs, rather than just the national interest. In addition, one would hope that whilst emphasis should be on outcomes based research, there are many more areas of need beyond improved productivity and economic development (e.g. improved health, security, sustainability and understanding cultural identity).

The Governance principles are important and the proposals for the Framework for National Research Infrastructure Governance are welcome, as is the recognition of the diverse nature of program governance and the desirability of having wide representation, including from industry.

The recognition, within the document, of recognising the need to invest in human capital as part of research infrastructure is particularly welcome as is the promotion of training researchers for the future.

B. Specific Comments on Focus areas

Digital data and eResearch platforms (2.1)

Much of what is proposed relies on increasingly sophisticated and high speed and high capacity electronic communications. Key to this is the development of National Broadband Network to an appropriate level and re-consideration of the benefits of the fibre to the premises (FTTP) model may be desirable. Any technological solutions will always be constrained by the limiting element and there is a danger that in a fully networked environment, the NBN may become this limiting factor.



Platforms for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (2.2)

ICOM Australia welcomes the focus on the importance of institutional collections (physical, archival and digital), particularly (and by implication) in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums sector. Ironically, however, (given ICOM's area of interest) we believe that there should be a stronger and clearer commitment to ensuring the cross-linkages between collecting institutions and the wider research sector, both in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. There should also be some recognition of the vast amount of data held outside, either major research organisations, or large collecting institutions. This could be a 'moment in time' to add enormous value to the multifarious sources of data residing in a huge diversity of places.

Due consideration is given to the harmonisation of platforms for Indigenous research and Integration of social sciences data into the HASS Platform initiatives, however, an important consideration, not just to data and research outputs relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is the matter of data protocols, collection, ownership and access.

The comments in the general section (A., above) pertain here. In addition, there are so many other social, political and environmental outcomes that could be achieved through the unification, harmonisation and improved discoverability of a wide range of research and collections data.

Environmental systems (2.6)

Many research and, of course, collecting institutions maintain collections of natural science and Earth science materials. These collections are critical in predictive modelling to underpin responsible environmental management, risk assessment, and resource development. Furthermore, the collections themselves provide irrefutable evidence and validation of data and occurrences. Too rarely are such collections adequately resourced, at the point of collection, of curation, of care and of maintenance. Consideration should be given to the strategic futures of collecting and collections, particularly in respect of molecular analysis.

There is also, recognised across the natural sciences, an urgent need to develop the next generation of research systematists and taxonomists who are becoming rarities in the human capital of research infrastructure.

Recognising and supporting this skills base is essential in Australia, where new species discovery is a daily occurrence, and this will develop the capacity to understand, manage and utilise the Australian environment.



Biosecurity (2.7)

Accurate species identification is critical to biosecurity research. Similar issues to those stated under Environmental Systems, above, apply here. There is a shortage of skilled scientists in this area. The loss of biosecurity specific researchers through retirement without a source of qualified replacements is a national problem.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this exposure draft.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alec Coles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alec Coles OBE

Chair
ICOM (Australia)

