

## Draft 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap Submission

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### Comments

The Group of Eight (Go8) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap.

This submission reflects the collective view of the Go8, representing Australia's leading research-intensive universities, accounting for over two-thirds of Australian university research activity, and spending around \$6 billion per year on research.

#### Key points:

1. The Go8 supports the recommendations of the Draft Roadmap, particularly Recommendations 2 (establishment of Research Infrastructure National Advisory Group), 3 (development of a Roadmap Investment Plan) and 4 (addressing needs of complementary initiatives).
2. The health of the entire research infrastructure system is a necessary condition for success in any of its parts and underpins the Go8's support of an expert Advisory Group to strategically consider and advise on priorities as a whole, including those arising from new complementary initiatives. More immediately, the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) will generate additional research infrastructure requirements, the resolution of which would benefit from careful and strategic consideration within the whole Roadmap package.
  - a. In relation to new complementary initiatives, deliberate allocation of resources should occur where possible *within* each initiative's funding to support the new associated research infrastructure and in a way that strategically aligns with the Roadmap.
3. In supporting the development of a Roadmap Investment Plan the Go8 reiterates its commitment that the \$3.7 billion remaining balance of the Education Investment Fund (EIF) be used to support research infrastructure. The Go8 also encourages consideration of the detailed work in the recently released 2015 Review of Research Infrastructure (RIR) Report in the investment plan.

4. The Go8 strongly supports the Draft's principle-based approach to informing research infrastructure investment that underpinned the effectiveness of the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). The Go8 welcomes continued emphasis on whole-of-life costs of infrastructure and funding for operational costs and principles that emphasise collaborating with industry, philanthropy and international players in the National Research Infrastructure Principles. In addition, the Go8 strongly advocates for inclusion of a principle that recognises that ongoing and predictable approaches to funding research infrastructure are critical.
5. Broadly, the Go8 supports the nine key focus areas to help frame future investment planning. The Go8 especially advocates for prioritisation of digital data and eResearch platforms in view of their ubiquitous importance to research and the effective addressing of the research infrastructure needs of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences disciplines, recognising the widespread significance of their outputs.
  - a. In strongly supporting the urgent addressing of high performance computing needs, the Go8 further supports the careful alignment, effective use and accessibility of the related Tier 1 facilities.
6. Finally, the Go8 advocates expert facilitation as necessary to establish collaborative, well-founded and strategic allocation of funding within the focus areas including through identification of specific research infrastructure and the generation of community partnerships and buy-in.

**Additional discussion:**

*Principles*

1. As identified in previous roadmaps and in the RIR report, effective planning and implementation of infrastructure provision continues to be limited by the absence of funding certainty. A principle that acknowledges the value of longer-term investment would strengthen the proposed set and constantly underline the stability needed to successfully implement facilities and their associated partnerships.
2. The Go8 strongly advocates for at least partial provision for operational and maintenance costs in any future Australian Government funding for new and existing infrastructure. NCRIS has clearly demonstrated that the ratio of co-investment to government funding is significant. However, infrastructure whose benefits are too distributed to garner disciplinary or targeted support to begin with, but are ubiquitously relevant such as generic eResearch infrastructure, may warrant particular consideration for such support
3. While parts of the national research infrastructure system have well-developed partnerships with industry, international and other stakeholders, we strongly support proposed principles to encourage desirable consistency and levels of collaboration across facilities.
  - a. Research and innovation precincts – often excellent models of cross-sector collaboration – rely on research infrastructure of the scale addressed by the roadmap in driving and sustaining productive and lucrative partnerships between universities, industry, and others. Examples include the Clayton precinct which benefits from close siting with the Australian Synchrotron and the Australian National Fabrication Facility's Melbourne node, and the emerging Carlton Connect precinct led by the University of Melbourne. Future focus on such precincts by Government including

under NISA should be accompanied by an explicit recognition of the role of research infrastructure in physically and virtually fostering the underpinning collaboration.

4. The Go8 reinforces the need to incorporate support in funding programs for translation skills that, firstly, enable custodians, managers and technical staff to effectively articulate the value of the infrastructure to potential users and, secondly, assist researchers and beneficiaries to subsequently explore how the research enabled by the infrastructure can be translated. The Go8 would welcome related measures proposed in the draft roadmap including secondments and scholarships for researchers to build skills and lay foundations for future collaboration.
5. The Go8 strongly supports a coordinated international engagement approach that underpins effective uptake of overseas infrastructure opportunities and enhanced international research collaboration.