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The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

CONSULTATION

2026 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap Exposure Draft Consultation

Department of Education

October 2026

Recommendations and responses to consultation questions

What does good National Research Infrastructure (NRI) look like?

1. **What additional elements of 'what good looks like' should be considered in the future design of the NRI system?**

DASSH is supportive of the overall position set out in the Exposure Draft offering the following recommendations as a contribution to its ongoing refinement and operationalisation.

2. **Where are the opportunities to strengthen the analysis of the global context and how could they be addressed?**

The use of task-specific expert advisory mechanisms to inform landscape mapping and priority setting will be essential to achieving the vision for a diverse and balanced NRI portfolio. Peak bodies such as DASSH, learned societies and the leaders of digital and cultural research collections have distinct and valuable perspectives to add to this important conversation.

3. **Where are the opportunities to strengthen the analysis of the current state in Australia, and how could they be addressed?**

The use of task-specific expert advisory mechanisms to inform landscape mapping and priority setting will be essential to achieving the vision for a diverse and balanced NRI portfolio. Peak bodies such as DASSH, learned societies and the leaders of digital and cultural research collections have distinct and valuable perspectives to add to this important conversation.

4. **What opportunities for change to current national planning and prioritisation approaches do you recommend for consideration?**

DASSH welcomes the approach to planning and prioritisation outlined in the Exposure Draft. The formation of the NRI Advisory Group to enhance coordination, planning and priority setting is welcome. DASSH recommends a review of the composition of the group to include expertise in the humanities and arts.

The Draft recognises the need to develop criteria for prioritising investment and monitoring/evaluating investment that reflect disciplinary contexts and the complexity of national challenges. DASSH recommends clearer focus on how competing benefits will be operationalised in determining investment priorities.

What does good National Research Infrastructure (NRI) look like? (cont.)

5. **What opportunities do you see for more effective coordination or integration among NRI facilities?**

Building on existing HASS infrastructure to produce nationally significant and sustainable supports for HASS researchers will be critical for addressing the challenges identified in the Roadmap. The final Roadmap should make clear that coordination and consolidation may need to be accompanied by new investment where the landscape analysis demonstrates unmet national need.

Capabilities—digital research infrastructure

8. **AI is impacting research practices in all domains. What are the implications for how we should plan and prioritise national research infrastructure? (You may wish to respond with respect to one or more specific domains, or with respect to digital research infrastructure as an enabling capability.)**

The value of digital infrastructure to support HASS disciplines is well demonstrated. Internationally developed AI models do not always meet the needs of HASS researchers and DASSH welcomes the recognition of the value of context specificity in the development of digital infrastructure. Supporting infrastructure development that is responsible, culturally appropriate and respectful of the rights of creators and other rightsholders as well as Indigenous Cultural, Intellectual and Data Sovereignty will be key.

DASSH recommends consideration of the following as critical to the development of AI in support of HASS research:

- Access to high-quality Australian cultural and social datasets, including representative multilingual and historically sensitive corpora
- A robust rights permissions and provenance infrastructure that supports auditability, and secure, appropriately governed access to sensitive data and operates consistently with Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights
- Expert evaluation that identifies biases, omissions and contributes to developing understanding of the nature and limits of co-research in HASS domains.
- Development of sovereign full-stack infrastructure (i.e. compute, model ownership and training, and inference all developed/located in Australia).

Capabilities—digital research infrastructure

9. **Do you agree with the definition of nationally significant research collections in terms of reach, connectivity and research impact? Why or why not?**

DASSH supports the Roadmap's recognition that nationally significant collections may be distributed across local, community, regional, state and national institutions and that institutional size, location or ownership are not appropriate proxies for significance. Members further welcome the focus on enhancing the connectivity, discoverability and interoperability of collections.

Capabilities—digital research infrastructure (cont.)

10. Are the strategic objectives and key areas for action the priority ones?

DASSH recommends the following be considered:

- Further clarity on the unit of assessment and investment, specifically in relation to the relationship between the underlying collections (objects, specimens, datasets) and the enabling infrastructure and/or curatorial systems that are fundamental to the uses of collections.
- National Significance is central to identifying opportunities for investment however focusing on reach, connectivity and impact may reinforce existing patterns of investment. DASSH recommends that national significance be considered separately from current infrastructure maturity and that greater attention be paid to the uniqueness and cultural value of collections.
- The Roadmap draws a distinction between collections intended to support research and innovation and those that serve cultural, educational and community functions. This boundary may be difficult to determine and maintain in practice, particularly where collections have multiple purposes or acquire research value over time. Priority should be accorded to collections with demonstrated or credible potential to support significant research.

Capabilities—overall

11. In the descriptions of any of the capabilities (workforce, digital research infrastructure, fabrication, observation, measurement, and collections), are there key aspects that have not been mentioned? If so, please elaborate.

Creative practice research infrastructure is not yet noted in the roadmap document. In terms of specific national infrastructure for creative researchers, there has been much discussion in the Consider the advice of the Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) on this topic – noting the benefit of a national platform for hosting and review of non-traditional research outputs, for example.

Findings

15. **Please add any feedback on the draft findings you would like the Roadmap Expert Working Group to consider.**

DASSH appreciates the opportunity to respond to the NRI Roadmap Exposure Draft. Our members endorse the overall approach, particularly in terms of its broad definition of research infrastructure and the explicit emphasis given to the value of HASS research in addressing national priorities and enhancing Australia's sovereign capability.

In addition, DASSH welcomes:

- The priority given to elevating Indigenous Knowledge Systems within Australia's national research infrastructure, including the commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority over Indigenous data
- The commitment to establishing a sustainable and diverse infrastructure portfolio that enables interdisciplinary research in the national interest
- Recognition of the need to engage stakeholders and disciplinary experts in landscape mapping and priority setting
- Recognition that public and social benefit, alongside research environmental and economic benefit should inform priority setting
- Recognition of the importance of archives, collections, and social and cultural datasets as vital components of Australia's research infrastructure
- Consideration of the value of expanding investment in national-scale HASS research infrastructure
- Recognition that AI models and related infrastructure must be responsive to Australian social, cultural and linguistic contexts
- Recognition of the value of international collaboration and the need to position Australian researchers to access emerging global research infrastructures

DASSH welcomes this important conversation and looks forward to future collaboration.

Overall

16. Please add any other feedback you would like the Roadmap Expert Working Group to consider.

The working group may like to consider examples of HASS related research infrastructure models such as https://internetobservatory.org.au/