	National Environmental Information Infrastructure Reference Group	March 27, 2015
		Final Minutes
		For endorsement

MEETING #03 – MINUTES FINAL

Meeting	Meeting # 03 – National Environmental Information Infrastructure Reference Group
Chair	Dr. Louise Minty, Assistant Director, Environmental Information Services
Meeting Date	March 27th, 2015
Location	Bureau of Meteorology – Darcy Room Level 3, 14 Childers Street, Canberra
Dial-in/Video	03 8638 1165
Time	10:00 am to 12:00 pm

MEMBERS

Representative	Agency	Attending
Christine Williams	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Apology
Tony Boston	Bureau of Meteorology	
Cynthia Love	CSIRO	
Evert Bleys	Department of Agriculture	
Tim Neal	Department of Communication	Margie Smith & Caroline Yuen
Will Douglas	Department of Education	
Jason Ferris	Department of the Environment	
Geoff Mason	Department of Finance	
Neal Evans	Geoscience Australia	
Lex Cogle	Murray Darling Basin Authority	
Tim Clancy	Terrestrial Ecosystems Research Network	
Tim Moltmann	Integrated Marine Observing System	
Adrian Burton	Australian National Data Service	
Ben Evans	National Computational Infrastructure	Apology
John LaSalle	Atlas of Living Australia	Peter Doherty
Phil Tickle	Spatial Information CRC	Apology

SECRETARIAT

Representative	Agency
Andre Zerger	Bureau of Meteorology

OBSERVERS

Representative	Agency
Rachel Horswell	Bureau of Meteorology
Vivienne Bordas	Bureau of Meteorology
John Timermanis	Bureau of Meteorology
Dale Percival	Bureau of Meteorology
Dominic Lowe	Bureau of Meteorology
Caroline Yuen	Department of Communication

MINUTES

Item	Item
Item 3.1	**Opening and attendance**
	Dr Louise Minty (Chair) welcomed participants to the third meeting of the reference group.
Item 3.2	**Minutes from Meeting #02**
	Approved the minutes as a true and accurate record of the NEII Reference Group meeting #2 held on the 3rd December 2014.
Item 3.3	**NEII Information Modelling Discussion Paper**

	Dominic Lowe provided an overview of the role of information modelling in relation to NEII through the Information Modelling Discussion Paper noting that information models are a core element of the NEII Reference Architecture. The presentation introduced key elements of information model development and some of the standards to be adopted for information modelling within NEII. Key elements of the presentation and the discussion paper include the following:
	• Information models are tools that capture the semantics of data.
	• Information models are valuable as they:
	    o document domain understanding in a structured way;
	    o are implementation neutral;
	    o provide an agreed reference point for the community when exchanging data or developing systems to work with data;
	    o provide a common structure that heterogeneous systems

	can map to for conversion, exchange and delivery of data; o offers a way to automatically derive an exchange format; and o provide a way to derive other products such as documentation or database schemas. • NEII shall leverage existing information modelling best-practice and make use of existing information models before developing new ones. • NEII will endorse particular information models as appropriate for use within the context of NEII. • The Bureau of Meteorology in its leadership of NEII will also help facilitate the development of information models as priorities dictate and resources allow.
Discussion	Members discussed information modelling and activities in their organisations that could be defined as information modelling. Most members could point to specific information models of importance to their domain. Given their domain specific nature, members noted the importance of first identifying a business driver to develop an information model noting that a number of information models already exist in some domains such as in hydrology and the geosciences. While most organisations deal with specific information models to address their business needs, there may be a requirement to develop 'meta-models'. A 'meta-model' can help us better understand how to share domain-specific models. The group noted the importance of improving our joint understanding of those information models currently supporting business practices around environmental information. Where models do not exist, the group noted the criticality of identifying a business need to drive model development.
ACTION	**Action 3.1** NEII Information Modelling Discussion Paper and presentation to be circulated to members
Item 3.4	**ANDS Vocabulary Development**
	Adrian Burton presented an overview of the ANDS Vocabulary Services project. ANDS aims to promote the use of defined and common concepts across NCRIS facilities and research organisations to facilitate more efficient data generation, discovery, analysis, integration and synthesis. The ANDS Vocabulary Services Project has three main components: 1. **Editor** – creates vocabularies where concepts can be added, edited and adapted, while maintaining version control. 2. **Repository** – provides a definitive point of access and is machine readable using SISSVoc for delivery. 3. **Portal** – enables discovery, provides descriptions and access, users can browse vocabularies structures. Includes dictionaries, data description and standard concepts. Project objectives for the next six months include: • Clarifying business processes including service agreements and service support documentation; • Technology implementation – ANDS are currently procuring PoolParty software, implementing SISSVoc and a new portal framework; • Project is currently in pilot mode with partners; and • Outreach and service integration with other vocabulary services.
Discussion and Questions	Members explored the importance of community governed vocabularies noting their prevalence within a number of business areas. Geoscience

	Australia noted that when developing a vocabulary, they first examine international exemplars and use or adapt these if appropriate. There was some discussion regarding the intersection between vocabularies and information models and thus possible priorities for the NEII in this space. The Bureau of Meteorology NEII-team committed to exploring the relative importance of vocabulary development and its relationship to information modelling ahead of the next meeting of the reference group through the development of a position paper.
ACTIONS	**Action 3.2** The Bureau of Meteorology to coordinate a stakeholder meeting leading to the development of a position paper around the role of vocabulary development and information modelling for the NEII.
Item 3.5	**NEII Stakeholder Engagement Model – State and Territory Engagement**
	Andre Zerger introduced the NEII Communication and Engagement Plan and provided a specific treatment of the NEII's approach to engaging with state and territory stakeholders. The NEII communication and engagement objectives are to: • Create partnerships to design, deliver and resource the strategic elements of NEII; • Gain the support of key data provider to establish NEII nodes; and • Communicate the importance of designing, building and populating core NEII components. The communication and engagement plan currently focuses on Australian Government stakeholders and other national initiatives such as NCRIS facilities and selected CRCs. At this point in the maturity of the NEII, states and territories have been identified as having a lower order priority. This will change as the programme evolves. This priority has been assigned for a number of reasons including (a) that the NEII needs to further mature and provide demonstrable deliverables before engaging broadly, (b) the investment in national (commonwealth) data is significant across reference group organisations and this should provide the initial focus for NEII standards adoption and providing evidence of benefit, and (c) the relatively small size of the NEII programme and high transaction cost associated with engaging nationally precludes deeper engagement nationally. However, the NEII does nevertheless engage with states and territories on an ad-hoc basis through existing mechanisms including national coordinating committees (e.g. Australian Collaborative Land Use Management Program, National State of the Environment forum) and major national events (e.g. Locate15). Engagement also occurs through the national expansion of the Bureau's electronic communique eXchange. The launch of the NEII web and collaboration space will also support engagement. The presentation noted that indirect engagement could occur through members of the NEII reference group and their respective engagement events with state and territory stakeholders.
Discussion and Questions	The group noted the importance of engaging through existing mechanisms with the Department of Finance signaling the potential for the Open Data Working group to act as conduit given its reach in states and territories. The Department of the Environment noted that many of their national datasets, such as those associated with biodiversity information come from data captured and curated by states and territories and there may be mechanisms through such activities to champion NEII objectives. The MDBA engages extensively with states and territories through its Basin Plan Implementation Committee and would welcome NEII involvement at a future meeting. The reference group suggested that the NEII programme develop a package of NEII communication material and make this available to

	members for use in their engagement activities with state and territory stakeholders. As a future engagement tactic the Bureau of Meteorology noted it may be possible to extend the membership of the reference group to states and territory NEII 'champions'. The Department of the Environment highlighted the possible relevance of NEII to the current legislative reform program around the EPBC Act that is devolving greater responsibility to the states and territories. This may also present an opportunity for NEII engagement with states and territories.
ACTIONS	**Action 3.3** NEII Reference Group Meeting 5 to review the Terms of Reference in regard to possible expansion of membership.
	Action 3.4 Murray Darling Basin Authority to provide advice regarding current membership of the Basin Plan Implementation Committee and extend an invitation to the NEII programme to present at a future meeting.
	Action 3.5 NEII Programme to produce electronic communication pack to support member engagement activities.
Item 3.6	**NEII Programme update**
	Rachel Horswell provide an update on the NEII Programme
Discussion and Questions	• The Social Architecture project undertaken by CSIRO is in the publication and clearance process. This project has produced two reports including (a) an overview of the concept of a social architecture to support federated information systems based on learnings from national and international experiences, and (b) specific recommendations to the NEII programme from these learnings. The first report will be made publicly available, while the second is for internal use only. Both reports will be provided to the Reference Group and will be accompanied with an NEII programme response in regard to recommendations. • Work is currently underway regarding the development of NEII Conformance Framework and this will be presented at NEII Reference Group Meeting #4. • The NEII Web and Collaboration space is currently under development through Splendid Projects and expected for completion in coming months. As well as providing information to the public the site will include a secure area for reference group members. • Work on capturing and documenting NEII user-stories and ensuing benefits will commence in May 2015. The objective of this project is to gain an understanding of your agency's need for an operational NEII informed by actual use-cases. The material will be used to produce NEII communication material and to inform technical design elements of the NEII. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with staff from NEII Reference Group organisations and findings synthesised into the NEII Roadmap to better articulate possible benefits.
ACTION	**ACTION 3.6** NEII Reference Group members to nominate a contact person for the NEII user-stories and benefits work.
Item 3.7	**Member Updates - Including relevant engagement with States and Territories**
	Department of the Environment – Currently working on designing the 2016 State of the Environment Report. For the 2016 report there will not be

	a ministerial appointed committee but instead chapter leadership and authorship will come from Commonwealth organisations. Authors have been identified for five of the themes (from a total of nine themes). In concert with the State of the Environment Reporting Process the Department are developing the Essential Environmental Measures Programme. The Department will provide an update around this programme at the next meeting of the reference group.
	Geoscience Australia are reviewing their NEII conformant data with a view to better integrating these into the NEII catalogue and could present at a future meeting of the Reference Group around this work.
	Department of Communications – are leading a study of Australian companies and NGOs that use open government data. Contributions to the study are actively being sought - http://www.opendata500.com/au/
ACTIONS	**ACTION 3.7** Department of the Environment to provide an update on Essential Environmental Measures at the next Reference Group meeting **ACTION 3.8** Geoscience Australia to provide an update on the catalog work with data.gov.au and to present on "how to get ready for a catalog" **ACTION 3.9** The Department of Communications to provide a link for Open Data 500 and to consider providing a story for the August edition of eXchange.
Item 3.8	**Other business**
NEXT MEETING	**Next meeting** early June TBC

ACTIONS SUMMARY

Actions completed and accepted by the NEIIRG will be removed from the rolling action list

#	Action	Due	Status
2.5	Members to consider inclusion of their content into the NEII Roadmap (across all five focus areas), or populate the activities register ahead of the NEIIRG #03.	Ongoing	In-progress
3.1	NEII Information Modelling Discussion Paper and presentation to be sent out to members.	With minutes from NEIIRG #03	Complete
3.2	The Bureau of Meteorology to coordinate a stakeholder meeting leading to the development of a position paper around the role of vocabulary development and information modelling for the NEII.	Prior to NEIIRG #04	
3.3	NEII Reference Group Meeting 5 to review the Terms of Reference in regard to possible expansion of membership.	NEIIRG #05	
3.4	Murray Darling Basin Authority to provide advice on membership of the Basin Plan Implementation committee and extend an invitation to the NEII programme.	Prior to NEIIRG #04	
3.5	NEII Programme to produce electronic communication pack for members	Prior to NEIIRG #04	
3.6	NEII Reference Group members to nominate a contact person to participate in the user stories and benefits work.	ASAP	In-progress
3.7	Environment to provide an update on Essential Environmental Measures at the next Reference Group meeting	NEIIRG #-04	
3.8	Geoscience Australia to provide an update on their catalogue work with data.gov.au and possible integration with NEII at a future meeting.		
3.9	The Department of Communications to provide a link for Open Data 500 and to consider providing a story for the August edition of eXchange.	ASAP	Complete