



Chair's Communique

Atlas of Living Australia Advisory Board

MEETING #13, October 2021

The 13th meeting of the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) Advisory Board was held on 29 October 2021. Participants included David Cantrill, Bek Christensen, Aaron Dodd, Hamish Holewa, Matt Miles, Toni Moate, Manu Saunders, Grant Nay, Stephen van Leeuwin & Andre Zerger.

New members

Meeting #13 saw us welcome three new members including Dr Manu Saunders (School of Environmental and Rural Sciences, University of New England), Dr Aaron Dodd (Centre for Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis, University of Melbourne), and myself as the incoming chair. Its always nice to bring a diversity of perspectives to the business of the ALA and we enjoyed having Manu and Aaron joining us.

Director's update

The ALA Director provided an update on major strategic activities, partnerships and progress since the last meeting in late July 2021. Of particular note this includes:

- Commencement of the DAWE-supported Multi-Regional Citizen Science Partnership funded by the Australian Government's *Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and their Habitat* program. Projects ALA are managing include a series of BioBlitzes in fire affected areas, prioritising insect specimen digitisation, and developing resources to enable active flora groups to monitor and record information on post-fire botanical surveys.
- Participation in October's Global Biodiversity

Information Facility (GBIF) Governing Board meeting was fascinating (as always). They provide the ALA an opportunity to reconnect and 'calibrate' its work program with international strategic priorities. We were also pleased to hear that ALA's former Board Member Dr Melodie McGeoch was elected to GBIF's Science Council which is excellent for the ALA and Australia.

- Reflecting on the release of ALA's [first Year in Review 2020-21](#) and progress made against the annual workplan.
- An update on ALA [research impact](#) ranging from exploring the impacts of recent megafires on Australian biota, refinement of species distribution models and exploring the extent of invasive species in Australia.
- Noting ALA's approach to workforce planning has demanded a change owing to an increasingly competitive IT market resulting in the establishment of an ALA careers and talent register (<https://www.ala.org.au/careers>).

Data Mobilisation and Infrastructure Modernisation Program

The board endorsed the formation of an *Australian Biodiversity Data Mobilisation and Infrastructure Modernisation program* to provide further resources to support our sector to enable an uplift in capability, and thus data available to the ALA to support national priorities. Detailed program design will commence shortly with an aim that successful projects will commence in July 2022. The program will be administered by a Working Group formed under our Advisory Board and Dr David Cantrill has kindly agreed to be the inaugural chair. We look forward to announcing the program in Q3 of this year.

Higher education engagement

Earlier in 2021 the ALA commissioned a review of options for improving how we support and engage with the higher education sector. This is one of ALA's most important user groups, recognising that tertiary students of today become the researchers of the future so improving awareness and familiarity of ALA capability is prudent. The ALA executive team reported on their response to the recommendations, noting most were accepted and plans are in place to recruit an ALA Training

and Outreach Officer to realise the recommendations.

National Research Infrastructure (NRI) roadmap engagement

The Board explored ALA's engagement with the NRI process, and particularly the process of stakeholder engagement that has recently been completed to inform the sector's response to an anticipated exposure draft of the roadmap. A draft ALA Decadal Growth for Impact Vision was further socialised with the Board. The vision details contemporary science drivers, new biodiversity data capabilities and sectors that will become priorities for the ALA from 2025.

In conclusion

It was a pleasure to host my first meeting and I thoroughly enjoyed the richness of discussions and interactions with our new Board members that have injected some new thinking into the business of the ALA. I've had a long association with the ALA including from both its inception, and in my role on ALA's first Management Committee so its an honour to be chairing the Board and supporting our mission as we move to a second decade of operation.

Dr Ian Cresswell
Chair, Atlas of Living Australia
Advisory Board
November, 2021