

Chair's Communique

Atlas of Living Australia Advisory Board

MEETING #15, July 2022, Brisbane 2022

The 15th meeting of the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) Advisory Board was held on 22 July 2022. Participants included Belinda Allison, David Cantrill, Ian Cresswell, Aaron Dodd, Hamish Holewa, Matt Miles, Toni Moate, Stephen Van Leeuwen and Andre Zerger. We were also pleased to be joined by Grant Nay and Kevin Thiele.

Brisbane stakeholder dinner

It was wonderful again to host a stakeholder dinner on the evening prior to our Board meeting. Guests represented CSIRO, Queensland University of Technology, Terrestrial Ecosystems Research Network, University of Queensland, Queensland Museum, Queensland Department of Environment and Science, and Queensland Water and Land Carers. It was lovely to reconnect with some familiar faces and meet new ones and we are grateful to everyone who joined us.

Director's update

The ALA Director provided an update on major strategic activities, partnerships and progress since the last meeting in April 2022. Of particular note:

- The recent release of the [ALA Labs](#) site provides users access to experiments in code, data analytics and visualisation through its Galah software package.
- Commencement of a joint project with BioPlatforms Australia to develop the pilot [Australian Reference Genome Atlas \(ARGA\)](#).
- Completion of our collaboration with the Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner around the

Multi-Regional Citizen Science Partnership.

- New ALA staff appointments to support a number of externally supported projects, including our nascent biosecurity program with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
- Partnering with the ARDC, IMOS and TERN to release the [EcoAssets](#) website populated with an initial suite of analytics-ready data to support national environmental reporting & assessment.

ALA Australian Biodiversity Data Mobilisation Program

Dr David Cantrill and Dr Jenna Wraith briefed on the completion of the inaugural [ALA Australian Biodiversity Data Mobilisation Program](#). Six fantastic projects were funded in this first year, from a range of institutions including NSW DPI, Queensland Museum, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, South Australian Museum, Edith Cowan University and Botanic Gardens and Park Authority, Kings Park WA.

The Board reflected on the level of interest in the first year of the program, and the framework for assessing proposals, with the view to improving next year's call. With the initial success of the program, the Board will also consider options for program expansion through partnerships.

Biodiversity Data Repository update

The Board received a progress update from the Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water's Mr Grant Nay and Dr Kevin Thiele on progress around the Commonwealth Biodiversity Data Repository (BDR) pilot stage. The discussion focused on the points of complementarity between the BDR and the ALA, and the important role it will play in helping improve Australia's biodiversity data system. It was agreed that it will be important to provide guidance to users and other stakeholders regarding the respective roles once the BDR is operational.

User satisfaction outcomes

The ALA recently completed its first comprehensive user satisfaction survey and presented the results to the Board. Overall, we were pleased to see high levels of user satisfaction across a number of sectors, and positive qualitative feedback. The survey also highlighted that ALA supports a diversity of users, beyond our only core research users including public, NGOs, and educators. Proportionally these make up a large cohort of users, reflecting the national interest in biodiversity identification and conservation.

ALA Strategy Mid-Point Review

The Director provided the Board an update on progress against ALA's Strategy 2020-2025 given the mid-point of implementation. This included how the ALA had focussed on improving its internal business process to support a

richer portfolio of external partnerships. that the Board confirmed the value of ALA's project management framework in helping set annual priorities, monitoring progress and providing the data to measure progress against strategic priorities. Furthermore, the Board endorsed a set of future priorities, including a proposed focus on reviewing and enhancing the ALA software user experience, and focusing attention on adopting a more strategic approach to national data priorities.

In conclusion

With the release in this same week of the 2021 National State of the Environment Report, the Board reflected on the fundamental role data and information will need to play in realising improvements in the state of Australia's biodiversity, and the critical role of the ALA. It certainly added some interesting context to our Board discussions.

I'd like to thank the Queensland Museum and its CEO Jim Thompson, and Dr Terry Miller for hosting our Board meeting in Brisbane. The Board and I look forward to our next meeting in November.

Dr Ian Cresswell
**Chair, Atlas of Living Australia
Advisory Board**
August, 2022

