



Connecting eResearch Expertise, Developing our Workforce.

2025



SUMMARY

Connecting eResearch Expertise, Developing our Workforce.

In 2024, AeRO successfully hosted its flagship conference: eResearch Australasia (eRA) and well-attended forums. These events continue to provide value and be relevant in our landscape (See Sections 2 & 3). Building on this momentum, the AeRO Executive Committee (EC) is proposing a year-round approach to event coordination by:

1. partnering with affiliated organisations;
2. leveraging AeRO's relationship strength with eRA sponsors to increase sponsorship for more events.

AeRO value to members.

AeRO provides value to its members by facilitating connections through the Australasian research sector, fostering relationships, developing expertise and skills (see Section 5).

Summary of key proposals to members

To pursue this mission AeRO EC proposes to:

- formalise engagements with “affiliated organisations” including ResBaz, RSE and WHPC who run a different set of relevant events for our workforce. AeRO proposes to offer them an affiliated status to enable us to support their events with sponsorship.
- engage current eRA sponsors and invite them to sponsor a wider program of events nationally. Sponsorship funding will be available to AeRO members and our affiliates for agreed events and fellowships.
- run an online version of eRA in the new year following the in-person conference to increase access to best-practice content for those unable to attend in person; as a starting bid to expand the conference's accessibility. The content will include material from the eResearch Australasia and New Zealand conferences.
- establish 2-3 Prizes to be awarded at eResearch. These will celebrate sharing of best practices and reward contributions.

These proposals are expanded and numbered in Section 7 for member discussions.

The eResearch Landscape

eResearch in Australia and New Zealand.

In Australia

- Government investment into NDRI workforce exists through 2028, however risks of skills retention due to shortage of digital skills within Australian commercial sector
- Partnerships to deliver continue to grow (challenges are bigger than anyone group)
- A mix ecosystem (commercial, government, private) is needed to support current and future research challenges

In New Zealand

- National level changes in NZ impacting NeSi and Universities with impact on workforce and conferences.

Observations by Executive Committee.

- There is a continued need for events that provide opportunities for workforce development, share best-practices and enable collaborations.
- Our community benefits most when activities happen year-round, not just at one big conference.
- Sponsors and members are seeking more consistent engagement
- Our affiliated organisations run great events. Those events would benefit from financial support through sponsorships.
- Our affiliated organisations are great vehicles for leadership development.

AeRO Updates

What is AeRO, who are our members and what have we been doing?

- AeRO is an incorporated association. From our constitution:
 - The term eResearch shall denote the application of ICT, science, technology, engineering and application of computers and allied technology to assist research activities across Australasian institutions and organisations. This may include Commonwealth organisations and publicly-funded research associations (PFRAs), universities, institutes of technology, higher education colleges, institutes of technical and further education, and similar Australasian groups in the public sector, industry and commerce. that supports universities, research facilities, and IT professionals in the eResearch space.
 - The purposes for which the Association is established are: to provide a forum for those interested in eResearch so as to stimulate discussion of relevant issues; to support research, advocacy and lobbying on behalf of the Australasian eResearch communities; to support eResearch in higher education; to promote cooperation and liaison with other groups and organisations which have related or complementary purposes and activities; to establish an association of organisations employing professionals engaged in eResearch; and to facilitate professional development of eResearch staff.
- There are currently 20 AeRO Member Organisations:

Universities	Research Infrastructure
Federation University	AARNet
Monash University	Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC)
RMIT	AURIN
Swinburne University of Technology	CSIRO
University of Auckland	Geosciences Australia
University of Adelaide	Intersect
University of New South Wales	National Computational Infrastructure
University of Queensland	Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre
University of Sydney	QCIF
University of Melbourne	WEHI

AeRO ran successful events in 2024:

- eResearch Australasia Conference 2024: 600+ attendees (240 from Member Orgs).
 - Forums, Well attended and co-located with conferences:
 - Supercomputing Asia, Sydney: Data Architecture
 - CAUDIT: Data Movement
- At eRA 2024 16 Organisations who were not AeRO members sent more than 3 staff. On that basis these organisations could join AeRO in 2025.
- At eRA 2024 17 Vendors sent more than 3 attendees. eRA sponsorship in 2024 was our largest. Based on vendors feedback there is opportunity for them to sponsor other events in 2025.
- eRA 2024 was host to BOF sessions and meetings for many of our affiliated eResearch organisations and communities including ResBaz, RSE and WHPC.
- At eRA 2024 a new Executive Committee was elected.
 - President: Luc Betbeder-Matibet, UNSW.
 - Vice-President: Aditi Subramanya., Pawsey.
 - Treasurer: Gareth Williams, CSIRO.
 - Co-opted: Ryan Fraser, AARNet.
 - Past-President: David Abramson
- AeRO has no debts or financial commitments.

AeRO's Value to our Members.

AeRO provides value to our members and the wider eResearch landscape by running events that connect expertise and develop our workforce.

Connecting eResearch Expertise

Our events are respected. They connect the wide range of eResearch specialities and enable best-practices to be shown and discussed. They are attended by our thought-leaders and subject matter experts. They also provide opportunities for sector networking and co-located meetings. The feedback on our events is good and we are seeing high attendance by eResearch leaders, experts and newcomers.

Our events have good content. The materials presented at the eRA conference are of high quality and make genuine contributions that improve our practices in the sector. Our forums have enabled deeper dives into emerging and topical subjects that need to be discussed.

Our events are affordable. Leveraging sponsorships and support of member organisations for staff time we are able to run events that have been good value for the sector.

Our events are increasingly inclusive but not fully accessible. Our conference committees and attendees are representative of our wider community. We note that the lack of online access and the event locations make it impossible for many to attend.

Going forward, AeRO will focus on coordinating our flagship AeRO-led events with our members and the sector. We want to continue to provide trusted and relevant events that showcase and celebrate our experts and best-practices.

We would like to support more events in more places and online. Events that are run by our members or affiliate organisations that align with our sector goals and connect eResearch expertise.

We aspire to have a coordinated calendar of events across Australia and NZ.

Developing our Workforce

Our events are critical to the development of our eResearch workforce. They provide the content and the opportunities for that content to be shared, discussed, and evaluated. Our events are where we identify and celebrate our next generation of eResearch leaders.

For our senior decision-makers our events provide benchmarking information and insights through formal presentations and informal networking.

For our subject matter experts they provide opportunities to share their work and further develop technical and leadership skills.

For our new workforce members and partners our events provide a shortcut to an understanding of what is happening in the sector and to hear what is current best practice.

Going forward, AeRO will focus more aspects of our events on workforce development and will partner with other organisations committed to workforce development.

We would also like to use our events to celebrate contributions made by individuals and teams through prizes or formal recognition.

We aspire to a calendar of events that covers key topics yearly to support workforce development.

AeRO <-> Sponsors <-> Affiliates

An opportunity to grow the number of high quality eResearch events.

AeRO currently has a great relationship with the Sponsors of the eRA conference. The executive committee thinks we can approach our sponsors and provide them a full year package of AeRO events.

The sponsorship budget would be held by AeRO (same as eRA) but used by members and affiliated organisations to improve the number and quality of local events across Australia and NZ. Funds could also be used to send key staff or experts to run or attend meetings.

AeRO <-> Sponsors.

- 17 vendors sent 3+ attendees.
- Current sponsor investment into eRA is significant. 2024 Conference surplus was \$89,271.49
- AeRO can hold sponsorship money from year to year. We currently use those funds to make eRA more affordable for our members.
- AeRO carried out a survey of our sponsors and exhibitors in 2024. We found strong support for the value they gain from being part of eRA conference and they would consider investing in other events.

AeRO <-> Affiliated Organisations.

- Groups like Women in HPC (WHPC), the Research Bazaar Community (ResBaz), and Research Software Engineer Australia and NZ (RSE-ANZ) share AeRO's mission of strengthening eResearch skills and culture. They run amazing events.
- These groups ran a range of events in 2024 and plan to run more in future years that AeRO can support.
- The eRA Conference has been a useful meeting place for these "affiliates" as they contribute to eResearch. They are currently only loosely affiliated with AeRO through informal networks and there is no formal coordination of events. In 2024 AeRO EC agreed they would support WHPC with five full complimentary conference registrations to enable their members to attend eRA.
- AeRO could partner more closely with affiliates through:
 - an aligned schedule of events across Australia and New Zealand.
 - membership or more formal arrangements with AeRO.

Affiliated Organisations <-> Sponsors

- Our members find it hard to engage sponsors directly because of University and NCRIS finance and procurement rules. AeRO has a proven and transparent model of working with sponsors for events.
- It is our understanding that affiliates also find it hard to retain sponsors across events. Without bank accounts, affiliates find it hard to retain the sponsorship funding they might attract for an event.
- The sponsors also find it hard to allocate funding for events that might be perceived to be one-off or smaller.
- AeRO could offer to hold sponsor funds for approved member and affiliate events.

AeRO <-> Commercial Member

- Access to AeRO events where leads of the research infrastructure will be present (Annual conference + 2 AeRO-run forums per year)
- Opportunity to run at least one event per annum with promotion/collaboration from AeRO:
 - AeRO will collaborate with commercial members to assist them in running one research-sector relevant forums promoting their products/services
 - Forum will be co-branded (AeRO + Commercial Member(s))



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- Expense to run “Commercial Member” forum will be at the Member’s expense
 - Events can be virtual or in-person (ability for AERO Board to attend will be on a case by case basis)

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