



IMOS is supported by the Australian Government through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy and the Super Science Initiative

IMOS EIF UPDATE #6

02 December 2009

Dear IMOS colleagues,

Thanks to all of you for coming to Melbourne last week and engaging so constructively.

In terms of developing our national, collaborative approach, it was good for the whole community to be exposed to the package of proposals submitted. It was certainly very helpful for the Office and the Advisory Board to have such a broadly-based group of experts from the Australian marine and climate science community totally focused on IMOS priority setting for the whole day.

I believe there was convergence on a number of important points that will assist us in making final decisions, and these are summarised below. This email also sets out the remaining steps in the process to develop a Project Plan for approval by DIISR in early 2010.

1. Points of convergence

- General acceptance of the synthesis of Node proposals under five research themes at whole-of-IMOS level.
- Widespread support for sustaining observations funded under NCRIS.
- That said, agreement of the need to do this at a reasonable level of ongoing cost, to ensure that "scope creep" does not consume the future growth inherent in the EIF funding decision.
- Acceptance that extension budgets as submitted do not meet the above criterion, and need to be substantially reduced. Facility Leaders and Operator Representatives to work with the IMOS Office on this basis.
- Priorities for enhancement under the Broadscale Ocean Monitoring (#1) and Climate Variability (#2) themes to be influenced by priorities in the Bluewater and Climate Node Proposal, subject to concerns about adequacy of the response to the Federal Budget imperative for enhanced monitoring in the Southern Ocean, and to feedback from the international peer reviews.
- Priorities for enhancement under the Major Boundary Currents and Interbasin Flows (#3) theme to be further considered by the Steering Committee of Node Leaders, noting that monitoring full-depth transport of the ITF (with US and Korean cooperation) and the EAC (at 28° south, off Brisbane) is considered plausible. Feedback from the international peer reviews is also relevant.
- Priorities for enhancement under the Continental Shelf Process (#4) and Biological Responses (#5) themes to be further considered by the Steering Committee of Node Leaders, noting that
 - Budget over-subscription is, at least in part, being driven by the cost of placing observing infrastructure in an increasing number of locations around Australia's huge coastline,

- Research questions posed by the Nodes suggest that greater integration of observations is required (rather than just more types of observations in more places), and
- Feedback from the international peer reviews of WAIMOS is also relevant.
- Agreement that developing the National Backbone remains important for IMOS, but that it (a) needs to be done cost-effectively (in the case of the National Reference Stations) and (b) needs leadership and national consensus on priorities (in the case of Satellite Remote Sensing).
- Acceptance that co-investment by partners, such as State Governments, will be important in terms of sustaining NCRIS investments (e.g. GBROOS) and enhancing under EIF in line with Node Proposals (e.g. WAIMOS in the North West, QIMOS in SEQ, establishment of TasIMOS, intensification in NSW and SA).
- Acceptance that IMOS, as a research infrastructure program, has constraints on what it can fund, and that these constraints are even tighter under EIF given its focus on “creating and developing” infrastructure. As such, certain types of proposals, such as those requesting operating funding for infrastructure funded under other programs, are unlikely to be supported.
- Acceptance that delivery by current Facilities funded under NCRIS, resulting in sustained observations that are discoverable and accessible through the IMOS Portal and used by the science community, is a valid consideration in assessing suitability for further investment under IMOS EIF in the 2009-13 timeframe.

2. Remaining steps

- Jo Neilson to work with Facility Leaders and Operator Representatives to achieve substantial reduction in the extension budgets. This is a major issue in ANMN, and an issue in Argo, SOTS, FAIMMS and SRS.
- A meeting of the Steering Committee of Node Leaders to be arranged, to discuss further synthesis and prioritisation across the Nodes, particularly in Themes 3, 4 and 5 (see above).
- The IMOS Office to develop a Draft Project Plan for consideration by the Advisory Board, with priorities for extension and enhancement assessed against the Five Year Strategy, the analysis of Proposals submitted (i.e. Issues Paper, discussion at the National Meeting, and at the Steering Committee meeting), and the international peer reviews. Priorities for enhancement will be assessed as “essential”, “highly desirable”, “suitable for IMOS 3” and “unsuitable for funding by IMOS”.
- The aim will be to ensure that, at a minimum, “essential” enhancements can be supported. It should be noted that, without co-investment, perhaps only 30% of the value of enhancements proposed will be able to be supported from available funding, and even this assumes we are successful in significantly reducing the budgeted costs of extension.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss further.

Regards, Tim

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