



2017 Annual Workshop

The Earth Systems and Climate Change (ESCC) Hub of the National Environmental Science Programme (NESP) held its first annual workshop on 19 and 20 July 2017 at Lancemore Hill, Victoria.

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together Hub's science leaders, management team (Hub Central) and key members of the Hub Steering Committee (HSC) and Hub Stakeholder Advisory Group (HSAG).

The focus of Day 1 was on stakeholder engagement, path to impact for the Hub's science, and obtaining input and perceptions from the Hub's Steering Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Interim Hub leader, Dr Geoff Gooley, described the ESCC Hub's research priorities, objectives, and goal of building a national partnership in multi-disciplinary Earth system science and modelling to provide Earth system and climate change information in support of a productive and resilient Australia. The objective is

to ensure that Australia's policy and management decisions are effectively informed by Earth systems and climate change science. The Hub is a science capability-based national partnership, funded jointly by Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) and partner agencies and hosted by CSIRO. Among other roles, it acts as a catalyst for collaboration, innovation and science delivery within the broader Australian Earth system and climate change science community.

Member of the Hub Steering Committee and former Hub leader, Dr Helen Cleugh, described the Australian climate change research landscape. She spoke about the Hub's niche, noting it is unique in being a climate change science program that funds universities, CSIRO and Bureau researchers to work together on joint projects, bringing together partners' capabilities and strengths. In this way, she said the Hub is a catalyst, knowledge broker, and point of contact for Earth system and climate change science, providing a high-level voice through the Steering Committee.

Lead and deputy chief investigators for the Hub's 11 research projects gave their Hub colleagues and stakeholders an update on their projects, in terms of both science and relevance to stakeholders.

Stakeholder representatives gave their opinions on the Hub and its science, including what's important to the stakeholder group they are representing, and how the Hub's research can move from innovation to impact:

- Ms Juanita Watters (DoEE) said that path to impact is a focus of mid-term evaluation of the NESP Hubs. She described the broader NESP program's cross-cutting themes, which includes climate risk, in which the ESCC Hub can play a major role in facilitating collaboration.
- Mr Chris Johnston (DoEE) noted from the perspective of those outside the Hub that climate change is not talked about, and that the Hub is at risk of assuming users are more engaged than they are or that they understand more than they do.

- Dr Wendy Craik (Chair of the Hub Steering Committee) advised on the importance of focussing on impact over the coming two years, and echoed Juanita's call for cross-Hub collaboration, particularly in high-value conservation areas such as the Great Barrier Reef where cross-cutting themes merge. Professor Jean Palutikof (NCCARF) noted that stakeholder engagement is ongoing, and needs to be a joint effort to determine stakeholder needs.
- Dr Nick Wood (Climate Policy Research and Chair of the Hub Stakeholder Advisory Committee) described how corporate Australia is using climate change data, and said the Hub can tailor products to user needs, providing future climate scenarios, expert views and information, and current research.

Project teams and stakeholder representatives formed groups to determine the contribution to the Hub's path to impact from projects. Ideas raised included:

- Conducting workshops focussing discussion on 'hot spots' such as Northern Australia or south-west Western Australia
- Taking a strategic approach to the identification of collaborators
- Picking winners and prioritising stakeholder relationships
- Identifying 'next' users as well as end users
- Recognising that, with regards to climate change information, one size doesn't fit all, but funding is needed to tailor information for each user.

Day 2 entailed discussion of other Hub functions, including the PhD and early career researcher development program, the activities of the Working Group on data management, and the role of Hub Central in activities such as communication and Indigenous engagement. For Day 2, only immediate Hub participants took part, including Hub Central and the research teams.

Participants continued discussion about path to impact and the Hub's niche, and explored the directions for the Hub for 2017–18 and beyond. Ideas for impact included the:

- importance of scientist-to-scientist collaboration and discussion, perhaps encouraged through a science symposium
- development of a synthesis report and related brochures and briefings on targeted topics
- need for communication both within and across projects within the Hub
- need for collaboration with other Hubs, and the consideration of climate change impacts by other Hubs
- niche the Hub holds in its knowledge of the landscape, depth of knowledge, and coordination of capability across organisations to deliver solutions
- importance of underpinning infrastructure from IMOS, TERN, etc.
- risks of spikes in demand for information, and consequent project delays
- opportunities for case studies, including use of projections in decision making, engagement with the WA water sector, global energy balance, carbon potential, and citizen science.

As a result of the two-day workshop, participants commented that:

- It was now clearer how to operate between projects and with Hub Central, and that the Hub needs just two or three success stories to demonstrate genuine impact.
- The Hub's structure had been clarified, with Hub Central's role clearer and that they are flexible, supportive, and here to help.
- There is availability of assistance from sector groups/committee in addition to Hub Central.
- Cross-project and cross-Hub collaboration is important, even if it is not easy.
- It was uplifting to hear of the communication of outcomes already achieved and delivered, and applications of research data sets and products.
- Some projects are closer to end users so pathways to impact are clearer, but all projects need to consider path to impact.
- There are possibilities of Indigenous engagement.
- The PhD program is important and there are ways of involving PhD students.
- Underpinning research and science infrastructure are important.
- It was good to interact with Hub researchers and staff, and external stakeholders, and hear about other projects.

For more information about the Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub visit www.nespcclimate.com.au