



AUSTRALIAN
ACCESS FEDERATION

Experts in
Trust & Identity

Annual Report 2025

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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, AAF would like to Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We support their connection to land, sea and sky Country and pay our deepest respects to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.

A message from our Chair and CEO

For the Australian Access Federation (AAF), 2025 was an important year in our dynamic 16-year journey delivering and innovating trust and identity services for researchers, educators and students.

A new independent economic analysis in 2025 showed that compared to a cost base of just \$6.8 million the AAF delivered approximately \$51 million in net benefits to the Australian higher education and research sector.

This delivered value accrued to universities and research organisations (who saved on IT staffing, account management, legal and administrative costs), students (who benefited from easier access to resources), and researchers and educators (who avoided duplicated activity).

These impressive economic impact figures, generated by Lateral Economics (LE), reflect AAF's ongoing commitment to delivering outstanding 'customer' value for our subscribers and members, the Australian Government and the researchers, educators and students that we serve. They also reflect our enduring strategic priorities: delivering innovative solutions, building and maintaining a culture of excellence, and enhancing operational excellence.

We are proud to share our highlights with you

In 2025, we took important steps toward modernising the trust and identity ecosystem and deepening our

sector engagement, at national and international scales.

As the Trust and Identity capability for NCRIS, we continued our system-wide approach to building a research ecosystem that seamlessly integrates with industry, government and the community — supercharging research innovation. We presented the Trust and Identity Roadmap at eResearch Australasia 2025 and continued to advance our Incubator project program — working closely with the community to build a secure and connected national research infrastructure ecosystem. These efforts are laying the foundation for a unified, future-ready approach to identity, access, and security across Australia's research landscape.

We also proudly convened the Advancing Trust and Identity for Research and Higher Education Roundtable, bringing together senior decision makers and leaders to design a national pathway for trust and identity modernisation. Ongoing conversations continue to clarify and shape a shared vision for the future — one that emphasises secure, user-centred services capable of meeting the needs of an increasingly connected, increasingly global research, innovation and education landscape.

As a part of our commitment to developing a better connected higher education and research ecosystem, we launched a new Service Catalogue as a central online place for researchers, educators, industry and government to discover the wide range of services that are available through federated access including data portals of the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), Terrestrial Ecosystem

Research Network (TERN), Atlas of Living Australia and data platforms for critical medical research and clinical trials.

We engaged widely across research and technology communities at national events that attract a global audience including eResearch Australasia 2025 and International Data Week (IDW) 2025. Along with strategic sector engagements with the National Earth and Environmental Science Facilities Forum (NEESFF), and at the TERN Biennial Science Symposium. We continue to participate in national and international groups such as the Open ID Foundation's Australian Digital Trust Community Group, the local chapter of a global standard body advancing the future of cross sector trust and identity. Through various engagements, we highlighted Australia's strengths in federated identity, nationally coordinated research access, and trusted data-sharing frameworks. Our presence reaffirmed that Australia is a trusted leader, and partner of global digital identity standards and research infrastructure collaboration.

Through our work leading the Australian ORCID Consortium we continued to drive the uptake of persistent identifiers (PIDs) in the Australian context. This has allowed the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to require an Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) attachment to all future research funding applications, ensuring all research activities — and impact pathways — can be tracked.

We continued our trust and identity leadership and advocacy by contributing

to Australian government-led consultations, including the National Data Research Infrastructure Strategy (NDRI) in 2024, the Strategic Examination of Research and Development (SERD), and the 2026 National Infrastructure (NRI) Roadmap (2026 NRI Roadmap) policy development processes. Our involvement is crucial to ensuring continuing investment meets the future trust and identity needs of our national research community.

Looking ahead as 2026 unfolds, we remain committed, as always, to building a future-ready trust and identity ecosystem for Australia. We plan to invest in innovations aimed at future-proofing our Federation technologies and continue driving stronger collaboration with national digital and cyber initiatives.

We extend our sincere thanks to our members, partners, stakeholders and the broader community for engaging and supporting us in 2025. We also recognise our amazing AAF team: thank you for your dedication, expertise, and commitment to strengthening Australia's digital foundations.

As the digital environment evolves — and as expectations for seamless, secure, privacy preserving access intensify — the role of the AAF for Australia's higher education and research has never been more important.

Together, we will continue to advance trust, identity, cybersecurity, and access — empowering Australia's research and education sectors to thrive in an increasingly complex and competitive world.



Paul Sherlock
Chair
Australian Access Federation Ltd.



Heath Marks
CEO
Australian Access Federation Ltd.

Australian Access Federation

We are a not-for-profit organisation delivering trust and identity services and leadership with, and for Australia's higher education and research sector.

Federation

The trust and identity Federation that we operate, enables people to access high value digital resources in a trusted environment. Our network of research, education, government and industry services is growing, allowing more people to seamlessly connect with high-value research knowledge and services in Australia and around the world. Our work is possible thanks to a national team — including experts in governance, software development, and cybersecurity. We are headquartered on Turrbal and Yuggera Country in Meanjin Brisbane.

Enabling access to digital services and resources



Scientific instrumentation



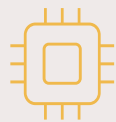
Administrative systems



Scholarly resources



Teaching, learning and research resources



Compute



Collaboration



Tools and portals



File transfer



Data

Enabling access to nationally and internationally significant providers

Through the Federation, people can connect to resources and digital collaboration environments globally, including those held by the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), CSIRO, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Elsevier, Nectar Research Cloud, Clarivate, the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN), the Australian Plant Phenomics Network (APPN) and many more entities.

Trust and Identity Capability for national research infrastructure

We are the national capability delivering trust and identity services for the Australian Government's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), a group of NRIs supported by the Department of Education. We work with the NCRIS community to develop a secure access framework, with agreed policies and scalable technology to enable academic, government and industry users to gain seamless and safe access to valuable NCRIS enabled data, software and digital assets.

Australian ORCID Consortium Lead

AAF leads the Australian ORCID Consortium, a group of universities and government agencies from around the nation who work together to support researchers in adopting ORCID services and resources nationally and regionally.

Our work driving the national uptake of ORCID in Australia benefits researchers, consortium members, the Australian Government and the wider community alike, by linking individual research activities and outputs in one place, enabling automatic impact tracking — proving the value and potential of Australia's investment in research and development (R&D) for the economy, society and the environment.

Building on the foundations of ORCID's successful national uptake, we deliver one of the key PIDs in the Australian National Persistent Identifier (PID) Strategy 2024 — developed collaboratively with the sector — it aims to accelerate Australian research quality, efficiency and impact through universal use of connected PIDs.



Our value to the sector

After celebrating our 15-year milestone in 2024, AAF commissioned Lateral Economics (LE) to undertake an impact evaluation which revealed the significant economic and social value that the AAF delivers to the Australian community.

In the 'Measuring the Economic Value of the Australian Access Federation' report released in September 2025, the authors found that the AAF generates up to \$84 million in benefits at a ratio of \$12.30 for every dollar spent.

This enormous value is generated for:

- Universities and research organisations, who save \$8–17 million annually in IT staffing and account management.
- Students, who gain easier access to journals, eBooks, and learning resources, saving \$14–32 million worth of time each year.
- Researchers and teachers, who save \$5–8 million annually, while the sector avoids \$1–6 million in duplicated research activity.

Additionally, cost savings are generated for entities through reduced legal and administrative overheads. Along with the "long tail" benefits arising from collaboration opportunities that amplify AAF's impact.

[Read the report >> aaf.edu.au/lateral-economics-report](https://aaf.edu.au/lateral-economics-report)

For every dollar spent on the AAF, Australia gains up to \$12.30 benefits.



Highlights

Federation

108

organisations
subscribed
to the AAF

685

Australian
service
connections

498

International
service
connections

13M

authentications

99.95%

network
availability

Subscriber profile

44

Commercial

5

Government

18

Research

41

University

Service categories



Teaching



Learning



Publishing

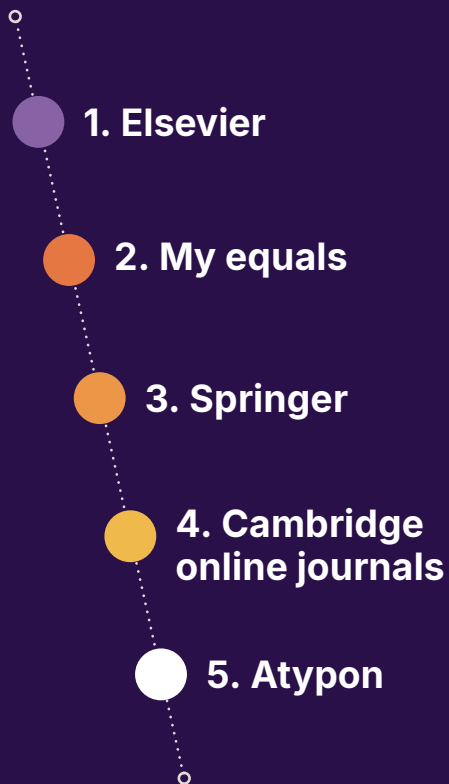


Administration

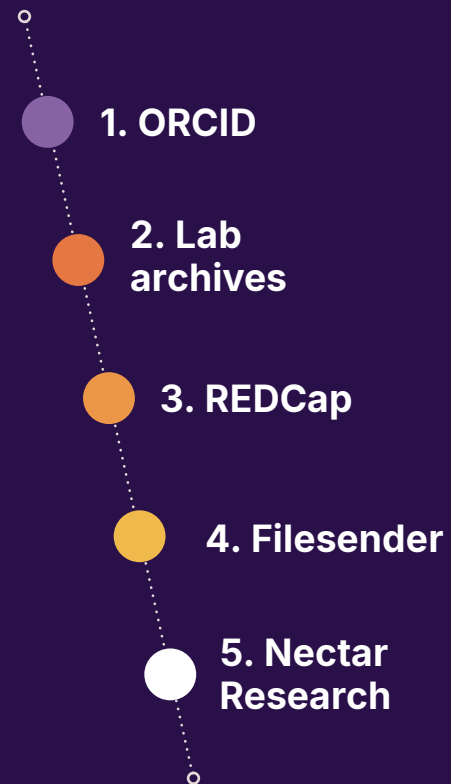
1,100+ service connections

Top 5 Services

Teaching and Learning



Research



1

Trust and
Identity
Capability

9

National
research
infrastructure
projects

Trusted access. Limitless discovery.

The Americas

Dataverse at
Harvard
National Institutes
of Health (NIH)
ORCID
Turnitin
Thomson
Reuters

Europe and the UK

Cambridge
University Press
Springer
Nature Journal
CERN
Elsevier
Royal
Society of
Chemistry
Springer

AAF connects people to the digital resources, applications and knowledge of over 1,100 services from around the world, seamlessly and safely, every day. Discover more: manager.aaf.edu.au/service_catalogue



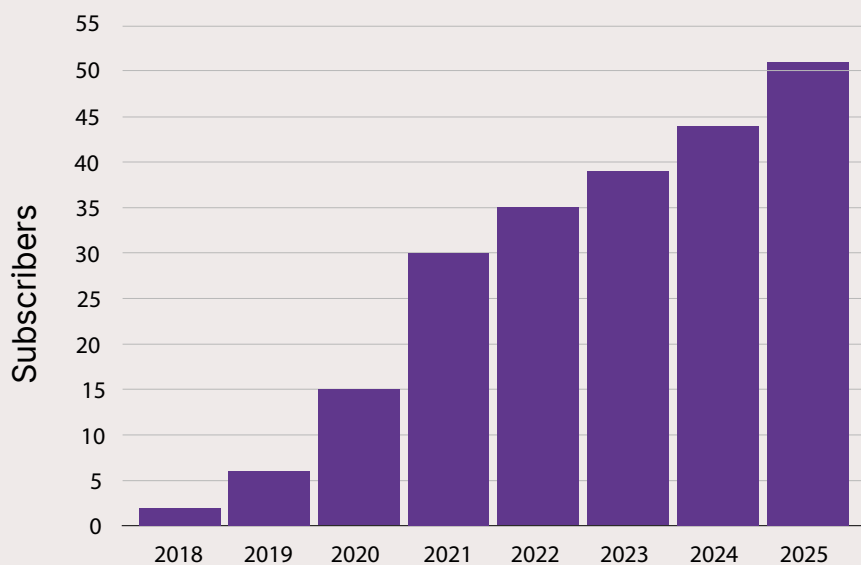
Our solutions

Rapid IdP — AAF's cloud hosted solution

2025 was a milestone year for Rapid IdP, with demand continuing to accelerate. A record 85% of subscribers now rely on AAF's fully hosted Rapid IdP, underscoring its reputation as the fastest, simplest and most trusted way to join the Federation.

Rapid IdP (Rapid Identity Provider) is the AAF's cutting edge, cloud hosted identity solution — engineered to deliver lightning fast, secure and seamless access to the national identity Federation. Purpose-built for scale, Rapid IdP powers the connection of small, medium and large organisations to hundreds of education and research services across Australia and around the world.

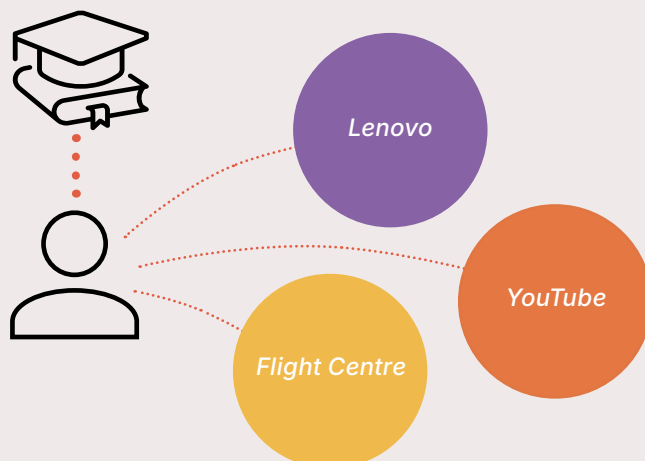
By managing hosting, configuration, security patching and feature updates, Rapid IdP removes complexity and unlocks instant connectivity for organisations that want robust identity services without the overhead.





VerifID Global — verifying customers easily, instantly and accurately

VerifID Global is an AAF operated digital service that enables commercial organisations and merchants to instantly and accurately verify if a person has a current student or staff relationship with an Australian university or research institution. Active in Australia and in the United Kingdom, VerifID enables university students to access student pricing packages from merchants like Apple, Lenovo, HP, H&M, Nike and Adidas.



Technology advancements

Service Catalogue

A one-stop-shop for access to high value digital resources and platforms

AAF's new Service Catalogue aims to strengthen Australia's research and collaboration ecosystem by expanding and promoting access to a broad range of trusted digital services.

By visiting the AAF website, people from academia, government and industry can seamlessly discover tools, data, HPC advanced computation and collaborative research platforms across the sector.

The catalogue features an extensive suite of nationally recognised services, such as:

- CSIRO Data Access Portal — that provides access to research data, software and other digital assets published by CSIRO across a range of disciplines.
- REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) (available at many Australian universities and SAHMRI) — a secure platform for building and managing

online research surveys and databases for clinical research.

- Atlas of Living Australia Portal — provides access to a comprehensive biodiversity database of Australia's flora and fauna.
- ARDC Nectar Research Cloud - provides fast, interactive, self-service cloud computing.
- ACCESS HIVE Forum — a collaboration platform for Earth systems and climate modellers.
- Bushfire Data Commons (University of Melbourne) — a shared bushfire data platform.

AAF invites service managers to list their service in the Service Catalogue, to ensure maximum visibility and accessibility for users and end-users. By simply following the 'Can't find your service' prompts, service owners can contribute to this central online gateway for researchers in Australia.

Discover Services

Explore a wide range of services available through the AAF. If your organisation is connected to the AAF, you can seamlessly access these services via your institution's Identity Provider.

[Connect Now](#)

[Can't find your service?](#)

[Join the Federation](#)

Search by name

Filter by tag

Filter by organisation

AAF Rapid IdP Manager

Australian Access Federation

Technology

Manage Cloud Hosted Identity Providers

[See more...](#)

ACCESS Hive Forum

Australian National University

NCRIS

Cybersecurity

AAF continues to take a systemic approach to strengthening the security, resilience and trustworthiness of Australia's national identity and access infrastructure, protecting the higher education and research sector — as cybersecurity starts with trusted identities.

Cybersecurity remained a central priority for AAF across the year, with our team focusing on proactive risk management, continuous monitoring, and targeted capability uplift across the Federation.

Strengthening core trust infrastructure

AAF maintained and enhanced the security posture of its core authentication and authorisation services, including the Federation and Rapid IdP, AAF's hosted cloud connectivity solution. Routine security reviews, configuration hardening, and automated monitoring ensured that services remained compliant with contemporary best practices and resilient against evolving threats.

Threat monitoring

Throughout the year, AAF operated continuous monitoring across its operational environments, enabling early detection of anomalous activity.

Security uplift for Subscribers

AAF continued to provide guidance and support to members to improve the security of federated identities across the sector.

In 2025, we initiated the following key initiatives:

- Multifactor Authentication (MFA) advocacy and readiness support, helping institutions transition to stronger authentication controls in alignment with national recommendations. We have mandated MFA signalling for all Rapid IdP and AAF Virtual Home (VH) users in 2025, with password-reset enforcement implemented at the same time to strengthen overall account security.
- Security advisories and vulnerability alerts, helping members promptly understand and navigate potential threads using identity systems.
- Technical best practice updates, helping Subscribers with secure configuration to reduce common risk exposures.

Alignment with National Cybersecurity Frameworks

AAF progressed work to align its controls and practices with the Australian Government's evolving cybersecurity standards, including uplift activities informed by the 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy and sector specific risk guidance.

Building sector capability

To support capability growth across research, education and government partners, we have delivered a series of national security, trust and identity engagements across 2025 including:

- Presentations at trust and identity community events
- Roundtables and discussions on cybersecurity and trust frameworks
- Contributions to sector-wide working groups to identify and support identity

assurance, security, and interoperability requirements including for the MortarCAPS Higher Learning Data Standard (MCDS), the Australasian Higher Education Cybersecurity Service (AHECS) and the Australian Digital Trust Community Group (ADT CG) in the Australian context. Abroad, we have worked with the Research and Education FEDerations group (REFEDS) and the (Authentication and Authorisation for Research and Collaboration) framework (AARC).

Looking ahead

In 2026, AAF will continue to strengthen our cyber security capability through a structured program of prevention, detection, response and governance activities. Key priorities include progressing the ISO 27001 program.



Services spotlight

We are proud to provide trusted and seamless pathways for researchers to access a range of digital services – from learning platforms to astronomical data – as well as greater health and biodiversity data interoperability.

Talis Aspire

Talis Aspire ensures libraries remain at the heart of teaching and learning at universities, by digitally and safely connecting students with faculty educators and library resources.

With seamless, secure authentication through the AAF, Talis Aspire integrates effortlessly into the university environment — ensuring everyone can access what they need, whenever they need it.

Talis Aspire makes it easy for students, librarians and teaching staff by quickly connecting students with course-relevant library holdings, read lists, annotated readings — sparking discussions with fellow students, lecturers and tutors. It ensures library content is directly embedded in the learning environment and gives the library oversight of all resources assigned in courses. Finally, it helps faculty staff to collate, structure, list and annotate resources.

MyEquals

MyEquals is the official digital tertiary credentials platform for the higher education sector in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It is world leading in providing easy, secure access to certified, official qualification records for universities and their students.

With authentication through the AAF, higher education institutions can easily and securely issue and manage official credentials for their students and graduates. For students, MyEquals is an easy and secure place to view and share the same credentials with employers, recruitment professionals and verification agencies.



South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI)

SAHMRI is South Australia's independent, not-for-profit health and medical research institute, operating in the Adelaide BioMed City hub for health and life sciences on Karna Country in Tarndanya Adelaide since late 2019. SAHMRI research teams and staff collaborate across themes including Aboriginal Health Equity, Lifelong Health, Precision Cancer Medicine and Women and Kids.

In late 2025, we deepened our collaboration with SAHMRI, enabling 700 unique researchers, clinicians and data scientists to securely access shared datasets, clinical trial platforms and analytical tools. With 64,000 authentications annually, the AAF infrastructure supports a robust and growing ecosystem of research and education. The benefits of this collaboration are clear:

- Streamlined and secure access to digital resources
- Enhanced collaboration across institutional and national borders
- Greater visibility of Australian research on the global stage.

SAMRHI is a model for how secure digital access can drive innovation and equity in healthcare. It is proving that infrastructure and innovation, when aligned, can accelerate discovery and improve lives — especially for more equitable healthcare outcomes.

Atlas of Living Australia

The Atlas of Living is Australia's central biodiversity database that helps scientists, policy makers, environmental planners and land managers, industry and the public to generate and track a more detailed picture of Australia's biodiversity. It aggregates extensive biodiversity data from multiple sources, including museums, herbaria, universities and citizen scientists.

Hosted by CSIRO and supported through NCRIS, the Atlas of Living Australia plays a crucial role in strengthening Australia's environmental data infrastructure and is recognised internationally as the Australian node of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). Its comprehensive data holdings and analysis tools continue to underpin national and global biodiversity insights, enabling informed decision-making across government, research and conservation sectors.

AAF enables secure, seamless access to the Atlas of Living Australia by providing researchers, educators and students across AAF-subscribing institutions with a federated single sign-on. Through our Service Catalogue, these users can access them using their organisational credentials, removing the need for separate accounts and streamlining access to biodiversity data, tools and services.

Enhancing the higher education and research sector

This year, we supported greater data interoperability across institutions in partnership with MortarCAPS Higher Learning Data Standard (MCDS).

In late 2025, MCDS and AAF formalised a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen national collaboration on data governance and identity interoperability across Australia's higher education sector.

MCDS is a data framework developed by CAUDIT in collaboration with more than 20 universities to enable greater data interoperability across higher education institutions, systems and partners.

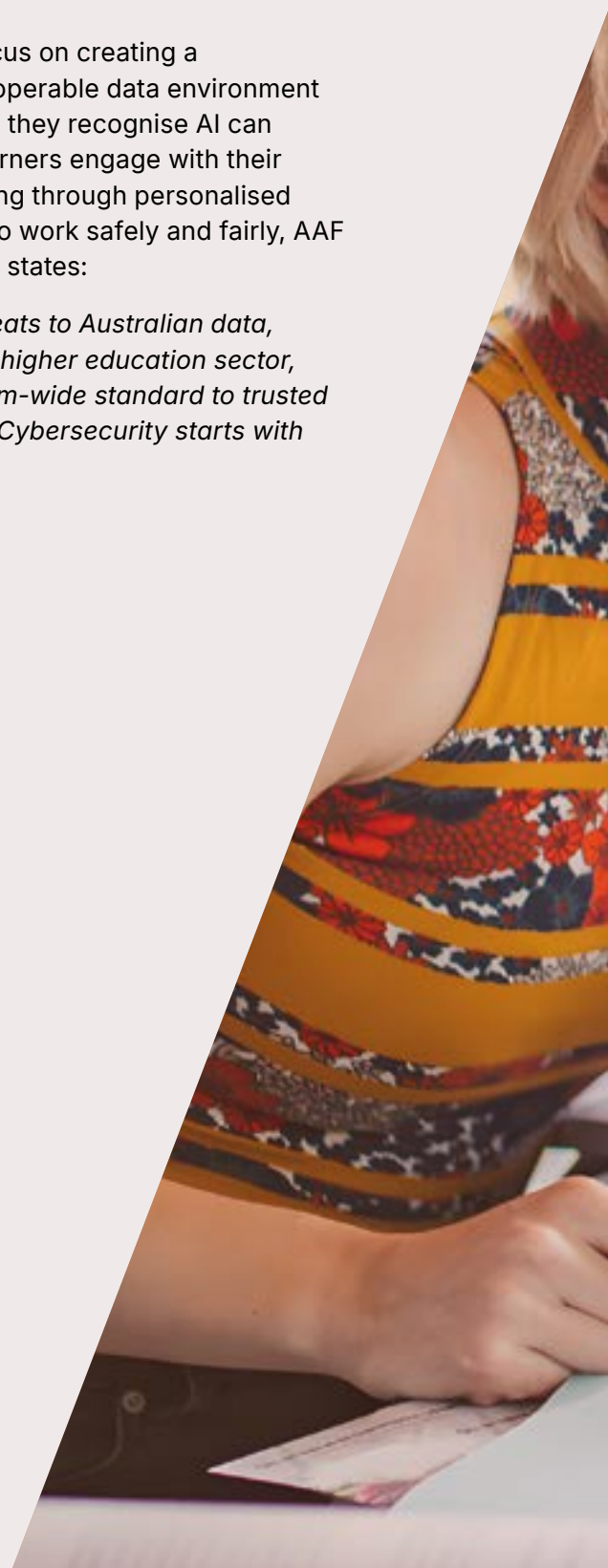
Together, we will work to support sector-wide alignment on identity and access management best practices, providing strategic guidance to enhance data access and sharing across the sector. Additionally, AAF will endorse MCDS as a sector-relevant model, while MCDS will incorporate AAF Subscriber needs into its data governance framework. We will do this through a series of working groups, shared research and pilot implementations, enabling sector-wide dialogue over a multi-year project.

Charlsey Pearce, MCDS CEO says:

"This partnership will empower higher education institutions by simplifying complex systems and enabling system-wide data access and sharing, thereby fostering innovation, and supporting national and global reporting requirements. Our focus is on building a learning-centric future — one where trusted data and intelligent systems converge to recognise and support individual learner growth across a lifetime. This collaboration strengthens that foundation."

While partners focus on creating a harmonised, interoperable data environment through this MOU, they recognise AI can transform how learners engage with their education, including through personalised pathways. For AI to work safely and fairly, AAF CEO, Heath Marks states:

"Current cyber threats to Australian data, particularly in the higher education sector, mean that a system-wide standard to trusted access is critical. Cybersecurity starts with trusted identity."





Australia's ORCID Consortium

AAF would like to thank our Consortium members for helping drive widespread ORCID adoption and integration amongst researchers and institutions in 2025, strengthening the future of research impact tracking.

AAF is proud to lead Australia's ORCID Consortium, a service that supports researchers across AAF's 44 member institutions to adopt an ORCID iD — a free, unique, persistent identifier (PID) that groups and tracks an individual researcher's activities and outputs over time.

AAF's key role in promoting ORCID uptake resulted in more than 209,000 ORCID iDs and 1.69 million items (i.e. research papers) being connected through member integrations in 2025. We supported 20 members to undertake multiple integrations, generating nearly 30,000 new ORCID iDs. AAF now observes over 240,000 ORCID records with an 'au' domain since the Consortium was launched in 2016.

270,380

journal articles, publications added through member integrations

240,000+

ORCID records with a '.au' domain (i.e. at an Australian institution)

209,000+

ORCID iDs connected by integrations

36,586

researchers that have benefitted from automatic updates to their ORCID records

29,826

new ORCID iDs created in 2025

Building a future where impact tracking is easy — the Australian National Persistent Identifier (PID) Strategy and Roadmap

PIDs are crucial for impact tracking of research inputs such as people and instruments, through to research outputs like scholarly articles, along with other online resources. They serve as unalterable markers for locating and identifying specific resources amidst the dynamic landscape of the internet, on a global scale.

Across 2025, we have continued to collaborate with the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) and the NCRIS community on the development of the National PID Roadmap, to ensure priority PIDs, including ORCID IDs as persistent identifiers for people, are adopted by researchers and institutions, driving improved research outcomes across Australia.

PIDs for Australia: ARC and NHMRC Policy Update

In December, we hosted an information session for Australian ORCID Consortium members featuring a significant policy update from AAF funders the ARC (Australian Research Council) and the NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council).

ARC and NHMRC play a pivotal role in shaping Australia's research landscape, including contributing to the Australian National PID Strategy and Roadmap.

From 2025 they will require the use of ORCID IDs in future research funding applications, ensuring all researcher activity can be tracked into the future.

ORCID governance

In 2025, Heath Marks, AAF CEO and ORCID Board Director, continued working with the ORCID Board and Steering Committee, which acts in the interests of the Australian ORCID Consortium members, providing guidance to the AAF as Consortium Lead and ensuring future sustainability. This group aims to provide expert knowledge, and contribute to the development of the National PID Roadmap, and to support future policy development and implementation.

The Australian ORCID Consortium Steering Committee — 2025

Judi Zielke	Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC)
Natasha Simons	AAF nominee
Melroy Almeida	Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL)
Martin Borchert	Universities Australia, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Research Committee, Chair
Professor Deborah Sweeny	Council of Australasian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT)
Greg Sawyer	National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
Julie Glover	Australian Research Council (ARC)
Alison Beasley	Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS), Chair
Michelle Vincent	

Australia's Trust and Identity Capability

Trusted identity underpins every aspect of modern research. As the Trust and Identity capability for NCRIS, we continue our system-wide approach to building a research ecosystem that seamlessly integrates with industry, government and the community — supercharging research innovation.

Overview

In 2025, we advanced this mission through several key initiatives. We presented the Trust and Identity Roadmap at eResearch Australasia 2025, held a national Roundtable in Sydney as a part of a new series of consultations which will run through 2026, and continued to advance our Incubator project program - working closely with the community to build a secure and connected national research infrastructure ecosystem. These efforts are laying the foundation for a unified, future-ready approach to identity, access, and security across Australia's research landscape.

As the national capability provider for trust and identity — funded through NCRIS — we continue to collaborate with research infrastructures nationwide to deliver federated and simplified access to integrated platforms and services. This work is making it easier for researchers, educators, government, and industry users to securely access the tools and data they need.

National research Infrastructure	Federation connected	Incubator Project Partner	Development and/or adoption of globally aligned T&I Policy	Advanced T&I capabilities	Using persistent identifiers for impact tracking
ACCESS-NRI (Australia climate and earth system simulator)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Astronomy Australia		✓	✓		
Atlas of Living Australia	✓				
ANFF (Australian National Fabrication Facility)			✓		
ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Agency)	✓		✓		
Australian Institute of Marine Science	✓		✓		
Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) and SEAF (Shared Environment Analytical Facility)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Australian Plant Phenomics Network	✓				
AuScope	✓				
Australian Urban Research Infrastructure (AURIN)	✓				
Bioplatforms Australia (BioCommons)		✓	✓	✓	
Microscopy Australia		✓			✓
National Computational Infrastructure (NCI)		✓	✓	✓	
National Imaging Facility (NIF)		✓	✓	✓	
Pawsey (via CSIRO)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phenomics Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN)	✓		✓	✓	

Roadmap for national research infrastructure

In 2025, we continued to extend and strengthen Australia's Trust and Identity capability for national research infrastructure, advancing a sovereign capability underpinned by robust policy, advanced infrastructure, and deep sector expertise.

We're extending this capability across the national research infrastructure ecosystem, enabling the network to confront key challenges: rapidly evolving cyber threats, inequitable access for smaller

institutions, and fragmented identity systems that risk isolating Australian researchers from global collaboration opportunities.

AAF has identified seven priority areas that must be addressed to unlock the full potential of trust and identity within the community.

1 Scalability

Interconnected programs delivering scalable, reusable tools and policies

2 Extending trusted access

Expanding trusted access to all researchers and users

3 Safe and assured access

A safe and secure research environment, embedding cybersecurity best practices from the ground up

4 Global Standards

Alignment with global frameworks like the EU AARC Blueprint Architecture

5 Strengthening Research Impact Tracking

Enhanced research impact tracking via persistent identifiers (PIDs)

6 Ethical access for sensitive data

Support for FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) principles

7 Uplifting national T&I skills

Addressing critical T&I skills gaps



Projects

In 2025, AAF collaborated with a range of national research infrastructures and their partners to improve how trust and identity services underpin Australia's research capability.

Our work has helped to uplift future omics research via the GUARDIANS project with Bioplatforms Australia's Australian BioCommons and their medical research institute partners.

Along with individual NCRIS organisations through our incubator program, that has focused on enabling trust and identity uplift for climate modelling, data, supercomputing, medical imaging, microscopy and phenomics capabilities.

The goals of our partnerships are clear: easier access to national research infrastructure, improved collaboration across sectors, and a safer, more connected research environment that enables Australian researchers to lead confidently on the global stage.

GUARDIANS project

- Australian BioCommons (NCRIS)
- Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute
- Children's Cancer Institute
- Garvan Institute of Medical Research
- National Computational Infrastructure
- QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute
- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Melbourne Collaborative Centre for Genomic Cancer Medicine
- The University of Sydney

NCRIS incubator project

- ARDC
- Pawsey
- ACCESS-NRI
- National Imaging Facility
- National Computational Infrastructure
- Phenomics Australia
- Astronomy Australia
- Microscopy Australia

Future planning

2025 was a pivotal year for sector consultation and funding submissions with the Australian Government. We actively contributed to the development of the National Digital Research Infrastructure (NDRI) Strategy and the 2026 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap investment planning processes, both led by the Department of Education. We also provided input into the Strategic Examination of Research and Development (SER&D) investment planning process led by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

Together, these processes will play a critical role in shaping Australia's research and development capabilities - and their national impact- through 2026 and beyond.



Projects spotlight

GUARDIANS

Implementing best practice identity and access management solutions for responsible human omics research data sharing

The GUARDIANS (human Genomics Uplift for Australia through Research Data Infrastructure At National Scale) project, accelerates human genomics and related omics research in Australia. By empowering Australian researchers to easily and securely discover, access, analyse and use human genomics data nationally, using the latest tools and resources.

AAF have partnered GUARDIANS to implement best practice identity and access management solutions to improve human omics research data

sharing — securely and responsibly. AAF has been working with GUARDIANS partners to identify their process and policy needs for shared identity and access management, streamlining and securing researcher access.

GUARDIANS is led by the Australian Biocommons, Australia's digital research infrastructure for molecular life science researchers and funded by Bioplatforms Australia.

ACCESS-NRI

Improving user tracking for impact reporting

Australia's climate simulator (ACCESS-NRI) is a national research Infrastructure that enables scientists to access climate modelling by developing, and making accessible, the Australian Community Climate and Earth System Simulator (ACCESS) modelling system framework.

ACCESS-NRI's impact is powerful: enabling the evidence base for global climate reports, weather forecasting, seasonal prediction, climate projection and climate adaptation policy.


In partnership with ACCESS-NRI we explored the challenges related to reporting on the usage of ACCESS-NRI assets such as code and data. By understanding the identity of users, we can enable accurate reporting on usage across services and organisational boundaries.

In 2025, we focused on improving impact tracking through identity mapping across ACCESS-NRI platforms, with a particular emphasis on linking user identities across systems including the ACCESS Hive forum, the National Computational Infrastructure (NCI) and GitHub.

We successfully enabled federated access to the ACCESS Hive forum via AAF login and EduGAIN — a global interfederation service - by refining account linkage to better associate institutional identities with user accounts.

Our work catalysed collaboration between ACCESS-NRI and the Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre to pursue the same aim between these climate modelling and supercomputing infrastructures in 2026.





Astronomy Australia

Building the foundations for an astronomy data commons

Astronomy Australia is a national research infrastructure that provides Australian-based astronomers with access to a range of world-class national and international astronomical facilities. It also supports development of these current and future research infrastructure.

In partnership with Astronomy Australia, we are building a Trust and Identity Roadmap to guide national coordination and uplift of identity capabilities across astronomy infrastructure and services. This work is critical for Australian astronomy, as Dr Alexander Cooke from Astronomy Australia says:

"Australia is a world leader in astronomy research, using infrastructure like the SKA-Low telescope in the West Australian outback, the European Southern

Observatory, and gravitational wave detectors in America, Europe and Japan. It's critical our researchers are able to combine data from disparate infrastructure here in Australia and across the world, and working with AAF will help us get there."

Our work will enable researchers to store, manage, analyse and share massive datasets from telescopes and simulations through the Astronomy Data Commons and create a clearer picture of cosmic events such as black hole mergers and gamma-ray bursts.



Australian Research Data Commons

Developing a trust and identity reference architecture

ARDC is Australia's leading research data facility, accelerating Australian research and innovation by driving excellence in the creation, analysis and retention of high-quality data assets.

AAF has partnered with the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) in the ARDC-SEAF Trust and Identity incubator, which will test the national Trust and Identity Framework and uplift the interoperability of ARDC's Nectar Research Cloud - which provides fast, remote access to computational software and data to Australian researchers.

This incubator will ensure that trust and identity policies and technologies are reusable across ARDC's thematic research data commons, to support

researchers across distributed infrastructures and research communities.

It will also advance a federated Authentication and Authorisation Infrastructure (AAI) to enable secure, frictionless collaboration between researchers and industry, building on SEAF's broader data-sharing and governance foundations.

In 2025, we conducted an initial analysis of AAI approaches, presented a set of architectural options to guide technical validation and planned the next phase of work.

Collaboration with the community

A national system-wide approach to trust and identity policy that is globally aligned

Policy is integral to a trusted national research infrastructure ecosystem and with the community we are advancing a systemic application to align with global standards.

Our Trust and Identity Policy Working Group made significant updates to the Policy Development Kit (PDK) in 2025. We strengthened governance provisions, updated privacy obligations aligned with the Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024, whilst expanding membership management and acceptable use policy frameworks. We also aligned the PDK more closely with international community standards, which are developed through the Authentication and Authorisation for Research and Collaboration (AARC) and Wise Information Security for Collaborating e-Infrastructures (WISE) initiatives.

These significant advancements were incorporated into our group's latest draft PDK in late 2025. This document has generated substantial group discussion and valuable feedback, reflecting the strong engagement and diverse expertise within the group. We have since surveyed the wider community on the draft, with the release of an updated PDK in early 2026.

Our group now plans to adopt a Community of Practice model for future engagement, and a wider trust and identity focus. Evolving our engagement approach will support more flexible participation, enabling community members to engage at a level that suits their organisation's capacity while creating space to share experiences, learnings, and to implement insights across the sector.



National Earth and Environmental Sciences Facilities Forum (NEESFF)

NEESFF is a collective of Australian Earth and environmental related infrastructures that work together to better integrate diverse datasets and digital platforms, and better coordinate investments, activities and outputs (including integrated datasets) to support greater research impact for climate, biodiversity, and the environment. The AAF contributes trust and identity expertise to the NEESFF and its sub-committees such as the Information Standards Advisory Panel (ISAP), which focuses on standards, interoperability, and infrastructure coordination globally.

Communication and Engagement

This year, we participated in over 250 national and international engagements — via conferences, committees and other consultations — fostering connection and innovation amongst subscribers, partners and the wider community.

In 2025, we launched our Roundtable series on Gadigal Country in Sydney, a major new national engagement initiative to help shape future national trust and identity strategies with the sector. This inaugural session featured an expert panel and deep sector discussion amongst representatives of universities, national research infrastructure, and other organisations who are experts in trust and identity. Participants discussed emerging challenges and opportunities in trust, identity, cybersecurity and interoperability. This event marked an important milestone in strengthening Australia’s coordinated trust and identity leadership.

We also continued our national roadshow program, meeting with representatives of NCRIS facilities, universities, government research teams and AAF Subscriber communities. Through various discussions, we deepened our understanding of people’s work, needs and developments across the Federation.

Finally, to ensure our services remain user-centred and future-ready, we ran three focus group sessions with a cross-section of AAF Subscribers and partners. Participants shared valuable feedback with us, enabling us to identify and implement continuous improvement initiatives across 2026.

National highlights

- eResearch Australasia 2025
- AHECS Cybersecurity Summit 2025
- International Data Week 2025
- Digital Nexus Alliance
- NCRIS Forum
- NCRIS Communications Network Meetings
- Research Infrastructure Connected (RIC) Community of Practice
- National PID Strategy and Roadmap Stakeholder Action Groups
- Australian ORCID Steering Committee
- Identifiers for Instruments Australia (i4iOZ)
- Research Bazaar (ResBaz)
- Australian Digital Trust Community Group
- MortarCAPS
- QUDIT ICT Security and Identity Management Community of Practice
- CAUDIT Identity & Access Management CoP
- AHECS Steering Committee
- RSAA25

International highlights

- International Data Week (IDW) 2025
- REFEDS Steering Committee
- REFEDS Schema Editorial Board
- Federated Identity Management for Research (FIM4R)
- CAUDIT
- eduGAIN Steering Group
- Asia Pacific Advanced Network (APAN) Identity and Access Working Group
- ORCID Board
- ORCID Consortia Interest Group
- AARC Engagement Group for Infrastructures (AEGIS)
- AARC TREE and EnCo Policy Coordination group
- eduGAIN OpenID Federation pilot project
- Crossref Ambassador
- VERIFIid Global with JISC

Researcher Identity –
all about attributes,
not authentication



John Scullen – Head, T&I Strategy & Futures, Australian A
Scott Koranda – Senior Research Scientist (NCSA), Univer



Experts in
Trust & Identity

29

presentations

25

conferences &
events attended

175

focus groups
and one-on-
one sessions

4

video
presentations

122

community of
practice sessions
attended

23

workshops
attended

43,488

total users
across all AAF
websites*

72,135

page views
across all AAF
websites^

262

broadcast
communications~

*37,217 users on aaf.edu.au, 3,004 users on trust.aaf.edu.au, 3,267 on verifid.global.

^53,620 page views on aaf.edu.au, 5,181 page views on trust.aaf.edu.au, 13,334 page views on verifid.global.

~Broadcast communications include all email and social media communications distributed.

AAF Roundtable, roadshows and events

Convening and collaborating with the Higher Education and Research sector in Australia to discuss the identity and security needs of the future

Listening to the community — Trust and Identity Roundtable series

In 2025, the AAF delivered a major new national engagement initiative through the Sydney Trust & Identity Roundtable (Roundtable), held on 16 September at the PARKROYAL Parramatta. Hosted alongside the CAUDIT Spring Members Meeting and the AHECS 2025 Cybersecurity Summit, the Roundtable provided a dedicated forum for senior leaders from higher education, research and national research infrastructures to examine the evolving landscape of trust, identity and cybersecurity. The event encouraged open dialogue on sector-wide challenges and opportunities, helping shape future roadmaps for Australia's trust and identity ecosystem.

The Roundtable featured a distinguished expert panel that included leaders from MortarCAPS, CAUDIT, connectID (AusPayPlus), AHECS, AURIN, and the AAF. Panelists discussed key themes such as strengthening trust frameworks for secure data sharing, addressing emerging cybersecurity risks, and developing identity strategies that support innovation, interoperability, and seamless collaboration. Attendees — including Chief Information Officers and Chief Information Security Officers, NRI directors and other key collaborators

— who contributed valuable insights, reinforcing the shared need for coordinated and future-focused trust and identity capabilities across Australia's research and education sectors.

The Roundtable marked the first event in a new national series that AAF will continue expanding across multiple states in 2026. Its success demonstrated strong sector appetite for ongoing collaboration, co-design, and shared strategic vision in trust and identity.

As a launchpad for deeper community engagement, the Roundtable also strengthened AAF's leadership role in the sector and established a model for ongoing national conversations to guide future T&I strategy, uplift capability, and support a more connected higher education and research sector.





AAF Roadshows

During 2025, roadshows were held throughout NSW and Queensland. Members of the AAF team met with universities and national research facilities, including QUT, Southern Queensland University, AIMS, and James Cook University, to discuss a range of identity and access management initiatives and opportunities to strengthen their organisation's trust and identity stance.

These conversations inform enhancements for access to services and resources, for students, staff, and research communities. Discussions included baseline expectations, assurance levels, attributes, eduGAIN and the Federation.



International Data Week 2025

IDW 2025, held in Meanjin Brisbane, brought together global leaders in research, infrastructure, and policy to explore the future of data-driven science and the critical role of trust and identity in enabling secure, FAIR and CARE data practices. It provided an invaluable opportunity for us to advance the global conversation around trusted access to data, and to connect with national and international peers to discuss challenges and opportunities.

"Attending IDW2025 alongside the RDA Plenary was invaluable for fostering conversations around data access and its impact on research.

It was fantastic to connect with like-minded professionals, share national and international initiatives, and engage in informal discussions on global best practices in data sharing and governance. These connections may lead to exciting future collaborations."

Melory Almeida, Technical Support Analyst — ORCID, AAF



eResearch Australasia 2025

The eResearch Australasia Conference (eRA 2025) is the leading annual forum for Australia’s digital research enablers — including research infrastructure providers, researchers, data specialists, technologists, librarians, software developers and more — to convene, share and grow future collaboration in support of long-term research impact.

At eRA 2025, we presented the Trust and Identity Roadmap, updated the community on the Trust and Identity Pathfinder incubators, and the cybersecurity benefits of trust and identity.

We delivered a series of presentations and interactive panel and Birds of a Feather’ sessions that highlighted AAF’s leadership in shaping Australia’s national trust and identity landscape. Titles of these AAF-led and co-led engagements include “Australian Trust and Identity Roadmap for National Research Infrastructure: Connecting Australia’s national digital research ecosystem simply and securely”, “Australian Trust and Identity Roadmap for National Research Infrastructure: Connecting Australia’s national digital research ecosystem simply and securely”, “T&I for NRI: Co-designing a system-wide approach” and “Operationalising Trust in Data Spaces”.



Asia Pacific Advanced Network (APAN)

The Asia Pacific Advanced Network (APAN) supports global research connection and collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region. It represents an international partnership of national research and education networks (NRENs) across Asia and Oceania, including Hong Kong, Singapore and Aotearoa New Zealand. The AAF has helped to federate APAN - by coordinating activities related to network technologies, services and applications, promoting and facilitating network-enabled research and education activities, including for tele-health and natural disaster mitigation applications.

APAN organises two meetings each year, enabling members to convene and review the progress of network projects, demonstrate technological advances, and undertake future planning.

This year, we attended the 59th Meeting of the Asia Pacific Advanced Network (APAN59) held in Yokohama and joined the 60th Meeting (APAN60) held in Hong Kong online. At APAN59, AAF's Head of Support, Terry Smith, provided updates on Federation activities and facilitated several sessions focused on identity federation developments and community engagement.

AAF's Senior Technical Support Analyst, Dalia Abraham presented in the collaborative ORCID and PIDs session, alongside ORCID representatives Chieh-Chih Estelle Cheng and Brian Minihan, who offered insights into the role of PIDs within NREN ecosystems and the expanding responsibilities of NRENs as ORCID community representatives.



Australasian Higher Education Cyber Security Service (AHECS) Cybersecurity Summit 2025

In 2025 AAF's Head of Technology Russell Ianniello, represented the AAF at the Australasian Higher Education Cyber Security Service - AHECS - Cybersecurity Summit, meeting with the community to discuss the needs of the higher education and research sector. Russell said:

"The higher education and research sector is particularly vulnerable due to its globally recognised research outputs, sensitive data, unique intellectual property and the increasing use of emerging technologies, such as AI. As such Australian Government agencies have introduced or amended legislation in acknowledgement of this growing risk to the research and education sector.

"AAF's Federation is secure by design, and all members benefit from this secure sharing of identity to seamlessly access a national and international network of services. We enhance security by preventing unauthorised account arrangements and credential theft - and mitigate risk by enforcing Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) as a standard practice.

This critical framework plays a vital role in maintaining identity security and reducing breach risks, as highlighted by experts like Karl Sellman, Chair of the AHECS.

In 2025, the AAF continued to work with the community to develop a system-wide approach to cybersecurity underpinned by trust and identity. We focussed on technology and policy to fulfil the needs of users, from advanced permissions to fine-grained access. As well as enabling identity that is portable and interoperable across multiple data and computational platforms.



AAF Team

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Deputy CEO
Head of Support
Head of T&I Strategy and Futures
Head of Technology
Technical Support Analyst — ORCID
ORCID Community Specialist
Senior Finance Officer
Development Team Lead
Senior Developer
Senior Developer
Software Developer
Software Developer
Solutions Architect
Software Developer
Data Engineer
Systems Engineer
Senior Technical Support Analyst
Manager, Project Management Office
Senior Solutions Analyst - Identity & Access
Portfolio Manager
Portfolio Manager
eResearch Analyst
Business Analyst
Policy Analyst
Business Analyst
Manager, Business Operations
Projects Officer
Manager, Communications and Marketing
Communications and Marketing Officer
Product Manager
Business Applications Support Officer
Technical Support Analyst
Project Manager
Project Officer
Portfolio Manager
Cyber Security Officer

Heath Marks
Margie Jantti
Terry Smith
John Scullen
Russell Ianniello
Melroy Almeida
Julie Toohey
Marita Dore
Matthew Puku
Jun Zheng
Jack Carpenter
Waldo Fouche
Kelley Foster
Anurag Katariya
Shamseera Kurumbeth
Blair Jackson
Joel Seaman
Dalia Abraham
Niels Charlouis
Patrick Carnuccio
Sarah Thomas
Nick Rossow
Fahame Emamjome
Andy Nguyen
Ayana Menorca
Ryan Paytes
Sheree Cuyten
Carolyn Plant
Kerry Mora
Emily Kuehner
Lauren Borger
Anthony Lee
Finn McCarthy
Poornima Mani
Jodi Barrie
Keith Brophy
Aurelius Oentoro

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Deputy Chair Director Adrian Dillon
Russell Parker

Retired in 2025

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Director Ian Gibson
Director Margie Jantti
Director Ankur Kumar

New in 2025

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**Experts in
Trust & Identity**



Australian Government
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