

Communique

Atlas of Living Australia Advisory Board

MEETING #27, July 30th, 2026

The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) Advisory Board met in Broome on July 30thth, kindly hosted by the Yawuru people and the Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga Language Centre. Board members attending: Ron Avery, Robyn Cleland, Dieter Hochuli, Marlee Hutton, Margie Jenkin, Toni Moate, Jennifer McIlwain, Andrew Morison, Rebecca Pirzl, Stephen Van Leeuwen and Andre Zerger. We were also pleased to be joined by Tania Laity, Juliet Seers, Sathish Sathya Moorthy, Cameron Slatyer, Mark Wallace & Heather Walsh from the ALA.

Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga Language Centre & Stakeholder Engagement

Our board meeting was kindly hosted by our board member Marlee Hutton, Bart Pigram and the Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga Indigenous Language Centre. As part of the board's commitment to Indigenous cultural capability development, we were welcomed by Auntie Di Appleby, who led a smoking ceremony and yarning circle. We were introduced to the history of the Yawuru people, the traditional owners of the lands and waters in and around Rubibi, the town of Broome.

We also welcomed Dr Jennifer McIlwain, Director of Science, West Australian Museum to her first advisory board meeting.

Director's Update

A major focus during the period was securing additional funding through the National Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy (NDRI), which required a significant organisation-wide effort to develop new activity plans and finalise revised funding arrangements with the Department of Education within a compressed timeframe. The board were briefed on the major funded programs including our NextGen data infrastructure, the Indigenous Ranger project and ALA's contribution to Coastal Research Infrastructure (CoastRI). The ALA has also contributed to important strategic discussions within CSIRO through participation in the Research

Facilities and Services Review and has continued strengthening partnerships with Environment Information Australia. Program delivery remains strong, highlighted by the commencement of the fifth year of the Australian Biodiversity Data Mobilisation Program and the successful release of an enhanced Lists Tool. Internally, progress continues on the Product Framework initiative to improve product governance and operational efficiency, while international engagement has been reinforced through Dr Martin Westgate's Churchill Fellowship work on biodiversity data quality.

Australian Biodiversity Data Mobilisation Program

The board were briefed on progress around the delivery of the ALA Data Mobilisation Program. It continues to play a critical role in addressing gaps in Australia's biodiversity data by supporting the digitisation and mobilisation of previously inaccessible records. Over its first five years, the program has invested almost \$900,000 across 26 projects, mobilised more than one million biodiversity occurrence records, and attracted additional co-investment, including a dedicated biosecurity stream funded by CSIRO. The program has significantly improved the representation of under-sampled taxa, regions and datasets within the ALA, strengthening the national evidence base for

biodiversity research, conservation and environmental decision-making. Demand for funding continues to exceed available resources, highlighting both the program's value and opportunities for further investment and partnerships.

ALA Risk Deep Dive

The board was briefed on cybersecurity, which remains one of the ALA's most significant enterprise risks due to the increasing volume and sophistication of threats targeting publicly accessible digital research infrastructure. The current risk is rated as High, reflecting the potential impact of unauthorised access, service disruption, system compromise, or privacy breaches on ALA operations and stakeholder trust. The board was advised that ALA is actively mitigating this risk through a combination of system modernisation, vulnerability management, continuous monitoring, and incident response capabilities. During the reporting period, ALA successfully detected and responded to a significant increase in malicious bot activity without any unauthorised access or privacy breaches. The ALA continues to work closely with the CSIRO Cyber Security, Privacy and IM&T teams, as well as commercial cloud hosting providers, to strengthen governance, improve resilience, implement security-by-design practices, and ensure ongoing alignment with contemporary cybersecurity best practices.

ALA National Research Infrastructure Strategic Update

The board was briefed on the outcomes of the National Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy (NDRI) investment round and the commencement of the 2026 National Research Infrastructure (NRI) Roadmap process.

The ALA achieved a positive funding outcome, securing almost \$11 million over two years through successful investments in the Next Generation Biodiversity Data Platform, Indigenous data capability initiatives, and continued support for Australia's participation in the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility \(GBIF\)](#). The ALA also participated in several collaborative projects, including CoastRI, creating new opportunities for biodiversity data integration and mobilisation. While these outcomes significantly strengthen the ALA's capacity to deliver strategic priorities, the board was also advised of the difficult decision to decommission the Australian Reference Genome Atlas (ARGA) following unsuccessful funding bids. Looking ahead, the ALA will focus on implementing newly funded initiatives, strengthening partnerships across the NCRIS ecosystem, and advocating for biological collections to be recognised as a national research infrastructure priority in the 2026 NRI Roadmap.

In Conclusion

I want to thank Bart Pigram, Marlee Hutton and Aunty Di Appleby for hosting and welcoming our advisory board in Rubibi (Broome). Our board is also grateful to Heather Walsh for coordinating this fantastic meeting.

Professor David Cantrill
Chair, Atlas of Living Australia
Advisory Board
August 2026