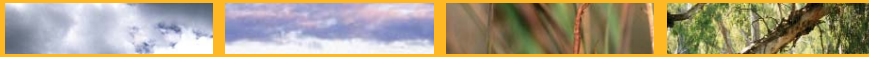


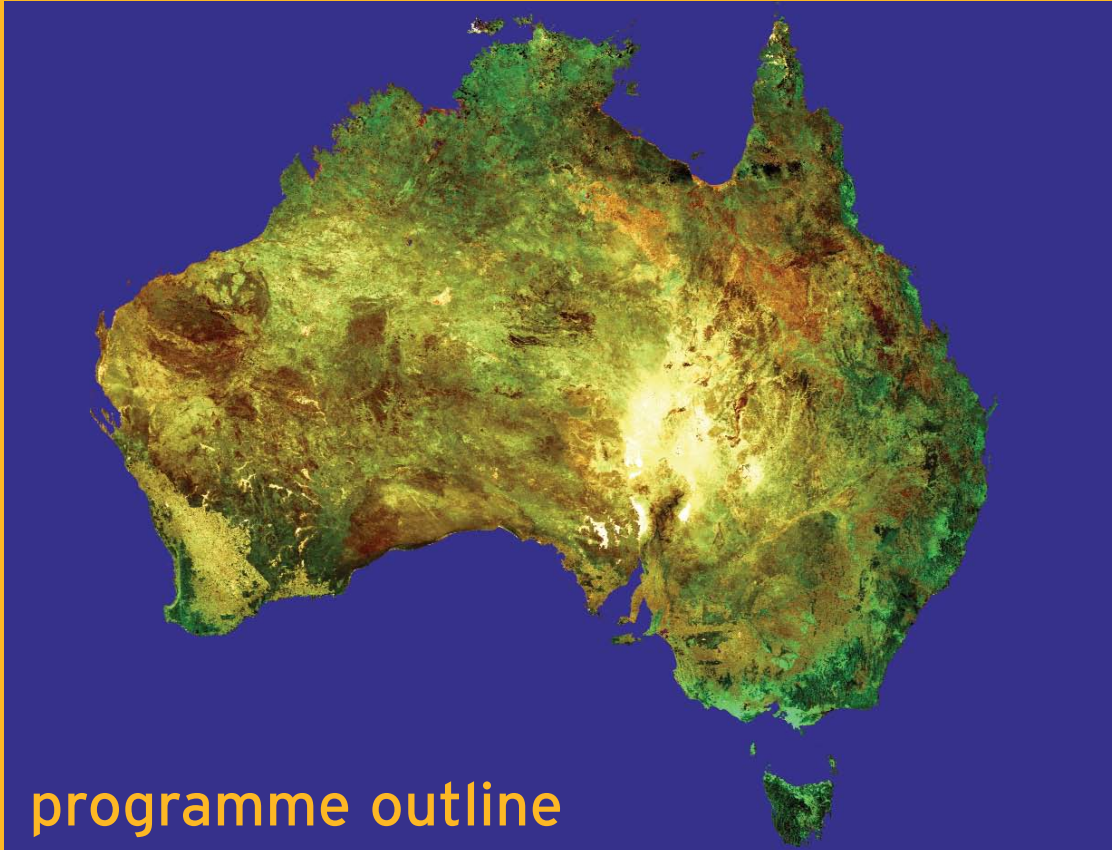


Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage



# Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities



# **COMMONWEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH FACILITIES**

## **PROGRAMME OUTLINE**

**- September 2005 -**



# CONTENTS

<b>1. Overview</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Introduction	4
<b>2. Categories of research investment</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Research Hubs	5
2.2 Significant Separate Projects	5
2.3 Fellowships	5
<b>3. Investment principles</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 Priority Research Areas	6
3.2 Environmentally significant public policy benefit	6
3.3 Not funded from other programmes	6
3.4 Duration	6
<b>4. Eligibility criteria</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Who can apply	7
4.2 World-class research	7
4.3 Enhancing Australia's environmental research capacity	7
4.4 Engagement with users	7
4.5 Collaboration and partnerships	7
4.6 Co-investment	8
4.7 Communications	8
4.8 Data requirements and accessibility	8
<b>5. Application process and timelines</b>	<b>9</b>
5.1 Expressions of Interest and Full Applications	9
5.2 Certification	9
5.3 Closing date and submission	9
5.4 Timelines	10
<b>6. Assessment and approval</b>	<b>10</b>
6.1 Assessment, Review, Reference Group	10
6.2 Role of Minister	11
6.3 Communication of offers	11
<b>7. Grant application</b>	<b>12</b>
7.1 Budget, reporting and acquittals	12
7.2 Intellectual property	12
7.3 Assets	12

# **1 OVERVIEW**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF) initiative was announced by the Prime Minister in September 2004 and funded in the 2005 budget.

The \$100 million initiative aims to improve Australia's capacity to understand and respond to priority environment concerns. The fund will support environmental public policy objectives in a range of critical areas, and draw on multiple disciplines, professional partnerships and existing research efforts.

Over a four-year period, \$60 million will be invested in national environmental research priorities through a series of competitive grant processes. The first cycle of funding will be for research activities that will commence in July 2006. A small component of the national funding may be reserved to address rapidly emerging priorities during the life of the programme.

As part of CERF, \$40 million will also be provided over five years from July 2005 for a Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF), located at James Cook University, for research relating to the Great Barrier Reef, tropical rainforests and coastal issues. Administrative arrangements for the implementation of the MTSRF are currently being developed.

## **2. CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH INVESTMENT**

The CERF programme will facilitate stronger synergies and the creation of national research hubs. This will build critical mass in areas of Australia's research strengths and national research priorities. Some assistance may also be provided for significant separate projects and fellowships.

The research investment will reflect different scales of investigation, from high-level, strategic or systemic issues for improved policy development and management of Australia's environment and heritage assets requiring large-scale multidisciplinary and integrated approaches over several years, through to highly targeted studies that address very specific and immediate needs in management information.

The research priorities for each funding cycle will be available in a separate document.

## 2.1 Research Hubs

Research Hubs will be suites of large-scale, multidisciplinary, multi-year research programs organised as partnerships between a range of collaborating institutions, organisations and research teams, and requiring funding for up to four years.

Administrative costs will primarily be the responsibility of the partners, and the call on CERF funding to support the administrative component of the proposal will be kept to a minimum. One partner organisation will be designated as the Lead Partner to act as funds recipient and disburser to the other partners, and to be responsible for performance and financial reporting to the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) over the life of the funding agreement.

## 2.2 Significant Separate Projects

Some funding may also be available for significant separate projects to be undertaken within a single institution, or by a limited number of collaborating partners. The projects would generally address a narrowly defined area of interest over a period of one to three years.

## 2.3 Fellowships

Some funding may also be available for fellowships to support acknowledged world-class scientists (Australian or international) to work within an Australian institution on an activity relevant to an identified priority research area. Funding of up to \$100 000 will be available to cover living, travel and limited operating costs. The work must include a commitment to promote relevant research beyond the science community, and applications must carry the endorsement of the hosting institution.

# 3. INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES

CERF will support research that has a strong public good focus and that can demonstrate a strong public good outcome. It will build critical mass in areas of Australia's research strengths. It will also encourage the development of world-class research facilities by supporting proposals that draw on multiple disciplines, professional partnerships and prior research efforts. It will deliver outcomes of significant national benefit particularly within the broad themes identified as the Australian Government's National Research Priorities, and the specific priority research areas announced within the CERF programme.

Funding will be approved on the expectation that research outcomes will significantly contribute to development, delivery, understanding, adoption, evaluation or improvement of management and public policy for

- i. protection, conservation or restoration of public good environmental assets *or*
- ii. sustainable use of public good environmental assets *or*
- iii. mitigation of current or potential threats to public good environmental assets.

### **3.1 Priority Research Areas**

An identified set of priority research areas (PRAs) will be announced in advance of calls for applications. While these priority areas will identify the specific information needs currently constraining the Australian Government in addressing its environmental responsibilities, funding will not necessarily be restricted to those particular issues, and Expressions of Interest for research activities that also target a mixture of identified PRAs and other environmental issues will be considered.

### **3.2 Environmentally significant public policy benefit**

CERF is seeking to fund research that will contribute to the management of significant environmental assets, such as those assets identified as a matter of National Environmental Significance, or to the improvement of delivery mechanisms in relation to the Australian Government's environment policies (see [www.deh.gov.au/about/policies.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/about/policies.html)).

### **3.3 Not funded from other programs**

The CERF programme is primarily directed toward research themes that have not yet received substantial assistance or have not been addressed under existing government funding programmes.

### **3.4 Duration**

Research funding will be provided for up to four years. Some funding streams and funding cycles will have a shorter time limit on their funding provisions. Funding for long-term proposals, such as Research Hubs, is expected to be allocated through two funding cycles, the first of which will be conducted in 2005-06 with successful proposals receiving funding from 2006-07.

## **4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Applicants, in addition to addressing the PRAs (Section 3.1), will be required to substantiate the merits of their research proposal and meet the eligibility criteria as outlined below.

### **4.1 Who can apply**

Applications must be for research activities conducted through Australian research institutions. Applications for funding will be accepted from existing public or private research institutions and can include collaboration and partnerships with private and public entities including industry bodies, government organisations, and non-government organisations specialising in the environment field. Partners gaining a direct benefit from the research will be expected to contribute, to some degree, to that work.

### **4.2 World-class research**

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposal is by researchers who have produced world-class research or who are working within world-class research institutions producing world-class research with a strong public-good focus.

### **4.3 Enhancing Australia's environmental research capacity**

Applications must include provisions for fostering and enhancing Australia's research capacity, including the provision of high quality research training and skills opportunity through, for example, the provision of postgraduate training.

### **4.4 Engagement with users**

Applicants must demonstrate that proposals have included consultation with the potential end-users of the research and contain mechanisms for ongoing engagement with them during the research programme.

### **4.5 Collaboration and partnerships**

Funding will be directed preferentially to collaborative proposals involving multiple research institutions and other organisations. Partnerships with relevant Indigenous organisations, end-user stakeholder groups and other fund providers are also desirable. This focus on collaboration is intended to encourage approaches that integrate different disciplines, researchers and institutions in generation of the results.

The anticipated benefit of proposed collaboration, and the quality of the proposed partnerships, will form part of the assessment process. Partnerships are expected to develop new and complementary physical and intellectual capital not presently available to the research environment.

## 4.6 Co-investment

In assessing Research Hub proposals, preference will be given to those that involve significant co-investment, including by industry or other end-users and by other public sector organisations that will benefit from the research outcomes.

Projects and fellowships may not require co-investment in order to be eligible for funding. If partners wish to participate in a project or fellowship, a degree of co-investment would be expected from such sponsors and partners.

Expressions of Interest are expected to provide an indication of the anticipated partners and potential levels of co-investment.

## 4.7 Communication

A communication strategy for delivering research outcomes to stakeholders at all levels is expected as part of the application process. This strategy will assist in facilitating the adoption of research results and encourage resource managers, decision-makers, industry and the community to access and make use of the research.

## 4.8 Data requirements and accessibility

All data will be required to conform to a set of data standards made available and updated at the time of each funding cycle. Details of the data standards will be available on the website with each application round.

It is expected that all research outputs will be publicly and freely accessible and available to government, end-users and the general public, preferably by electronic means where appropriate (see [Australian Government guidelines on Internet and electronic access](#)).

## **5. APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINES**

### **5.1 Expressions of Interest and Full Applications**

Proponents seeking funding during one of the announced periods for applications for a funding stream are required to submit a completed Expression of Interest (Eol) form.

This form is intended to provide sufficient information for DEH to determine if the research concept is relevant to the Australian Government's environmental research priorities and the required funds are consistent with the available funding profile.

Proponents whose research concept, as outlined in the Eol, is assessed as worthy of further consideration will be requested to submit a Full Application. Note that a request by DEH for the development of a Full Application does not represent any commitment on the part of the Australian Government to fund the proposed research activity.

Application forms for Eol and Full Applications, as well as supporting information, are available on the CERF web site: [www.deh.gov.au/cerf](http://www.deh.gov.au/cerf)

Arrangements for receipt of applications will be indicated as each application process is announced.

### **5.2 Certification**

Eols and Full Applications must be certified, prior to submission, by the principal researcher and by the appropriate administrative contact of the lead partner. The Full Application must be certified by the administrative contact for each partner organisation.

### **5.3 Closing date and submission**

The closing dates for Eols and Full Applications for the funding streams (Hubs, Projects and Fellowships) will be announced on the CERF web site: [www.deh.gov.au/cerf](http://www.deh.gov.au/cerf)

Hard copies of Eols and Full Applications should be forwarded to:

Grant Application  
Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities  
Department of Environment and Heritage  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2602  
Australia

## 5.4 Timelines

CERF has funding to the end of the 2009-10 financial year. Funding for longer term proposals such as Research Hubs will be allocated through two possible funding cycles in the 2005-06 and 2006-07 financial years. It is intended that successful applications for research hub funding under the first funding cycle will receive their first payments in July 2006.

The first round of research hub funding is expected to guide the identification of priorities for individual projects and for the Fellowships components of the CERF. A public call for proposals to be funded under these components will be made as this occurs.

## 6. ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL

### 6.1 Assessment process

CERF will use a two-stage proposal assessment process.

#### 1. Expression of Interest:

- responds to the programme eligibility criteria
- outlines specific objectives of the proposal against key criteria, and sets out the experience and achievements of the key researcher or researchers
- will be subject to peer review on methodological feasibility and research team "track record" *and*
- will be assessed by DEH for relevance to Australian Government's research priorities/information needs.

#### 2. Full Application

- should be prepared in response to specific request from DEH (following evaluation of Eol)
- has stronger focus on the research methods, the anticipated research outcomes and products and the proposed collaborative arrangements
- will be subject to full Reference Group reviews (including face-to-face interviews with proponents) focusing on merit, feasibility, improvements and potential collaborative opportunities *and*
- on approval, will be attached as a schedule to the funding agreement (the contract).

There are two key processes associated with both the Expression of Interest and Full Application :

- internal (departmental) assessment of relevance of the proposed research to the Australian Government's research priorities/information needs *and*
- independent review of the proposed methodologies, researcher/research team track record, identification of potential collaborative opportunities and other improvements, through both peer reviewers and through the CERF Reference Group.

**Peer Reviewers** – CERF will draw on peer review networks established by other funding programs, particularly Land and Water Australia and the Australian Research Council, researchers identified by DEH, and the applicant's nominated referees.

**Reference Group** – A CERF Reference Group will be established to ensure recommendations to the Minister are backed by a high degree of scientific rigor and credibility. The Reference Group will consist of leading scientists from the range of disciplines directly relevant to the Australian Government's environmental responsibilities, and will provide the Department and the Minister with:

- a comprehensive appraisal of first funding round full applications *and*
- advice on programme priorities for the second funding round.

## 6.2 Role of Minister

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has sole responsibility for final funding decisions under CERF. The Minister, in making a decision, can draw upon any source of advice including that of the CERF Reference Group and DEH.

## 6.3 Communication of offers

The Minister for Environment and Heritage will write to successful applicants advising them of his approval for the proposal, and outlining any conditions associated with the approval.

Successful applicants will then be contacted by DEH to finalise a Grant Agreement, including the incorporation of any additional conditions required by the Minister as part of his approval.

Unsuccessful applicants, at both the EoI and Full Application stage, will be contacted in writing by DEH.

## **7. GRANT APPLICATION**

### **7.1 Budget, reporting and acquittals**

Successful applicants will be required to sign a Standard Grant Agreement with DEH. This agreement will cover the project budget, financial and performance reporting and acquittal, intellectual property, assets, data requirements. A copy of the standard grant agreement is available on the CERF web site: [www.deh.gov.au/cerf](http://www.deh.gov.au/cerf)

### **7.2 Intellectual property**

Prior to signing the agreement, the proponents will be required to describe any existing material for which intellectual property rights are either owned by the organisation or owned by a third party but which the organisation has a licence to use.

It is expected that intellectual property generated by this grant programme will be freely accessible and available to the government, end-users and the general public.

Successful applicants will also be required to grant to the Commonwealth a permanent, irrevocable, free, world-wide, non-exclusive licence to use, reproduce, adapt and exploit the intellectual property derived from the funded research.

### **7.3 Assets**

Restrictions will be placed on the purchase of assets with grant funds and approval will be required for use of funds to purchase an asset.

## Further information

Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities  
Department of the Environment and Heritage

GPO Box 787  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone: 02 6274 1111

Please check our web site  
for constant updates  
[www.deh.gov.au/cerf](http://www.deh.gov.au/cerf)

September 2005

Credits: Beach John Baker; Port Brisbane industry Alastair Betts; Striped legless lizard Andrew Tatnell; Barmah Forest in flood Trevor J. Lerino; Regeneration Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Overseas Information Branch; Satellite Image compiled by Environmental Resources Information Network (Department of the Environment and Heritage) Image supplied by CSIRO, 1994.

© Commonwealth of Australia 2005

Information contained in this publication may be copied or reproduced for study, research, information or educational purposes, subject to inclusion of an acknowledgment of the source.