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Subj: RE: QUESTNET/AARNet Organisation

Alan

Sorry about the delay in responding - and thanks for your reminder. In fact this was on my "To do today" list, but it might have been pushed off the bottom as things so often are.

> John Mullarvey would like the following on the QUESTNET May 13 meeting agenda
> -
> "The Relationship between State Networks and AARNet".
>
> I think we need to share some ideas on this so that we arrive at a considered
> view and one that would be supported by our Universities.

Agreed. I think this is of even more importance than ever as a result of the push towards usage-based charging for AARNet.

>
> The State Government paper on High Performance Computing would seem to
> reflect a mood of the State Government that there is value in combining
> the resources of the departments of government and the universities to
> provide supercomputer facilities at national if not international standard.

Yes - except, of course, for the DPI/JCU Institute for Tropical Natural Resources (ITNR) initiative which is still proceeding, albeit there has been no evident action here for several weeks (Since our end of the funding was approved by our Finance Committee in fact).

> In this paper, there was also reference to the value of QUESTNET, the State
> Government's investment in it, and a passing comment re other State
> Government initiatives in networking through IIB with perhaps the
> requirements being met through an expansion of QUESTNET.
>
> At the last meeting of the QUESTNET Management Committee, we discussed
> the desirability of the expansion of QUESTNET through greater distribution
> to regional areas, particularly having regard to current and projected
> distance education needs of Universities, rural health programmes, TAFE
> requirements and Universities' Continuing Education Programs in primary
> industry, mining engineering, education, veterinary medicine, regional
> research stations, etc.
>
> All of these applications have a strong teaching/research bias and would
> probably fall correctly within the QUESTNET/AARNet common interest charter.
> I have some doubt if industry development through the IIB would meet this
> test unless joint research with a University is involved.

That seems a reasonable interpretation.

> The CSIRO is not a public authority of the State of Queensland so that
> there would need to be special considerations in how the needs and
> governance of CSIRO could be linked into a State Network if necessary.
> I am unsure if Bond University which was established under an Act of the
> State of Queensland is regarded as a public authority of the State for
> certain purposes.
>
> ON THE OTHER HAND it must be said that the present organisation of AARNet
> has served us well. We probably have one of the most reliable nets in the
> world with access to all world wide services. Central control of the
> engineering of the network and standards will remain a prerequisite to
> future developments that meets the same quality as in the past. There are
> certain national services e.g. Archie, Directory Services and SERT that
> should be common for the whole "au" domain. The ownership of AARNet by
> AVCC Inc ensures that all of the major stake holders are represented
> through their chief executives.

>
> So what is needed is a structure that gives us the best of both worlds.
> My early thoughts are that AARNet should remain much the same as it is
> organisationally with institutions contributing funds on whatever basis
> is decided (traffic or AVCC formulae or a combination). There would be
> a regional AARNet Management Advisory Committee with Directors only.
> QUESTNET would become the regional distribution network for education in
> Queensland and would link to the Queensland AARNet spine. It would have
> much wider representation on its management committee. QUESTNET would
> become an affiliate of AARNet.

I take it that "link to the Queensland AARNet spine" really means, in some cases, "piggyback onto the ...". I have no disagreement with that, it's simply a matter of terminology.

You suggestion certainly has some merit. I think my only difficulty relates to the AARNet funding. As I see it, local routers apart, in Queensland the institutions (initially with the aid of a State Govt grant) pay for almost all of the intra-State network links. Nobody seems to have any problem with that. However, AARNet would like to (does?) charge each institution on a basis related to the network bandwidth to that institution. In my view we should try very hard to get agreement that the AARNet requirement is to provide bandwidth to the State hub, and only traffic outside the State should be chargeable by AARNet. We need a structure which allows that to happen.

So I would prefer a structure which has a State Management Committee (QUESTNet perhaps, but possibly QAARNet with the type of membership you suggest) and that Committee is responsible, in effect, for paying the AARNet charges. I guess in a sense it's a detail, as I agree with your general structure, but simply would like to see a more realistic way of meeting AARNet costs.

> The purpose of this is to start thinking and discussion rather than
> representing my locked-in views on the matter.

Well, I suppose I have added a little - although perhaps not a lot of "value" to the discussion.

I'd like to see what others say and perhaps come back again.

Regards

Ian

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