MEMORANDUM

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

To: Queensland Computer Centre Directors

From: Director, Information
Technology Centre,
Griffith University

File: DJ618

Date: 15 January 1990

Subject: *AARNet Regional Management*

Graham Rees has distributed a paper to you entitled "The Case for Regional Management" (of AARNet) and has invited anyone to comment prior to the meeting of Queensland Computer Centre Directors on January 22nd. Because I will be on recreational leave on that day and so unable to attend, I thought I would let my views be known to you in advance. I don't know whether everyone is reachable yet via ACSNET (we really do need AARNet!), so to be sure of reaching everyone I am replying to Graham's electronically-delivered paper in the old-fashioned way.

I would like to congratulate Graham on bringing this issue out into the open because it needs to be cleared up. I understand Graham's concerns but in the main I do not share them. My reason for saying this is that I think he is worrying unnecessarily. I believe that the "AVCC model" (i.e. the management model as proposed in the paper circulated to Universities with the covering letter by the Director of Planning & Development, AVCC dated 21st December 1989) has been well thought out and includes enough "regional management" to answer Graham's concerns.

Chapter 4 "Management of AARNet" of the AVCC model allows for the creation of "regional based structures to provide local management and assistance in the installation and maintenance of the individual links to each member site connected to AARNet". There is nothing in the AVCC model to prevent Queensland from setting up such a structure if it wishes, in fact it seems to be encouraged. Such a structure in the AVCC model will clearly have a lot of influence over the way AARNet is managed in the region. I cannot imagine that the central body of AARNet would over-rule the recommendations of a Queensland body unless it has a very good reason to do so (such as the need to maintain uniform national standards).

I believe that Griffith University would be opposed to being represented on the AARNet senior management body only through a regional body. In the hypothetical situation where we might disagree with a decision of the regional body we would want our main path of representation to be via our shareholding in AARNet (i.e. via our AVCC membership) rather than via the regional body. Nevertheless the AVCC model does talk about representation of some of the views of member sites via "regional-based groups".

Although Graham does not refer to it directly, perhaps the central issue really is about AARNet funding? Should a regional body have the power to

influence basic AARNet membership fees for AARNet members in the region? The current funding model envisages that AARNet membership fees should be based on institution operating grants. I strongly support this policy on egalitarian principles and would oppose any move to impose membership subscription differentials between regions.

Obviously Queensland, if it wishes, can provide extra services ("value-added services") for Queensland institutions. These would have to be paid for by those institutions that want to use them. Examples are:

> educational services
> extra Statewide network facilities (over and above those provided by AARNet)
> extra software development (over and above what Queensland may perform under an AARNet contract).

I believe that such services may be very valuable but that the funding for them must be "unbundled". There must be no compulsion on any AARNet member in Queensland to buy any particular service if it does not wish to do so. Most importantly, the basic AARNet service that it receives must not be affected in any way by whether or not any particular value-added services are purchased from the regional body or not. By unbundling the charges for these services we can ensure that they are delivered in a cost-effective manner.

Although I have not had time to canvass opinion fully at Griffith University, I believe that the opinions expressed here will be this University's position. I fully agree that a regional body should be involved in the management of AARNet but believe that the proposed AVCC model caters adequately for this need.

Mike Steel

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