

I N T E R O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

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Comments on the AARNet Management Paper
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These comments refer to the text of the AARNet Management Paper considered at the AARNet Steering Committee meeting on 14 December, 1989. In general these comments are in the context of decisions taken by that meeting, notwithstanding that the author may have more radical views.

1) The AARNet Board

It should be made clear in the document that all formal links between the AARNet and the AV-CC (not between AARNet Operations and the AV-CC Secretariat) are via the AARNet Board.

As described, the Board lacks adequate terms of reference. I suggest the following insertion before the last paragraph of section 3:

" The AARNet Board is responsible to the AV-CC for the development and operation of the AARNet to meet the needs of AARNet members. To this end the AARNet Board will:

"a) liaise with ACDP and CSIRO

"b) develop policies for the AARNet consistent with AV-CC policy, and taking into account consultation with ACDP and CSIRO

"c) approve the AARNet annual budget for recommendation to the AV-CC, membership fees, and other policy issues relevant to funding, and review spending against budget

"d) determine terms and conditions of membership

"e) liaise with and assist in the development of Regional Management Groups

"f) approve agreements with external networks, and

"g) report to the AV-CC, ACDP and CSIRO at least twice per year."

2) Regional Network Groups

The Steering Committee agreed to a strengthening of the Regional Network Management structures within the AARNet, where appropriate (eg where a strong regional network management structure already exists, as in Queensland, or develops later).

Section 5 of the paper should be revised to reflect this, and to provide a more effective role for these groups than merely the provision of "value-added services". The AARNet as a whole should not be committed only to "common networking services to every AARNet member institution" (top of p3), as different regions will wish to develop different services. In the case of Queensland, there are clear economic and other advantages in merging the operations of AARNet and QTInet, and it is likely that these can best be achieved by devolving the regional operation of AARNet to a regional management group. This would bring the AARNet in that respect closer to the original concept of a backbone network linking strong regional groups.

AARNet is inadequately funded and staffed to provide the services promised on a national basis without the full cooperation of regional management, which must be matched by providing appropriate regional control.

Acceptable principles for Regional Networking Groups to take over some AARNet functions should be stated. For example, must they contain one representative from each member, or can they be small executive groups as in NSW? How are commercial or other non-educational members to be represented, especially CSIRO?

It is difficult to be precise in such a document about the terms of reference of Regional network Groups, as the aim is to promote responsiveness to local conditions. But the following should be added to the responsibilities listed in p3:

"* where appropriate, the management of selected AARNet resources in the region"

3) AARNet Operations Section

The Steering Committee agreed that there should be one person in the AARNet Operations Section responsible for the management of the Unit, and for carrying out the policies of the AARNet Board. This person should report to the Deputy Secretary of the AV-CC for staffing purposes, but should be responsible to and report to the AARNet Board, and should always attend Board meetings. The Steering Committee further agreed that this person should in the first instance be the current Technical Manager, and that the Business Manager should report to the Technical Manager.

In view of this, it may be advisable to re-designate the Technical manager as AARNet General Manager.

4) Regional Operations

This section should make clear whether Regional Network Operations Sections (a better name, perhaps) report to the AARNet Operations Section, or to Regional Network Groups.

Chris Rusbridge
15 January, 1989