



Response to Dr Terrill's review of the National Environmental Science Program

November 2023

The Department thanks Dr Terrill for his comprehensive review of the performance of phase one and the implementation of phase two of the National Environmental Science Program (NESP).

Recommendation	Response
<i>Recommendation 1:</i> NESP 2 focus on national priorities and target users critical to achieving national priorities.	The Department accepts this recommendation
<i>Recommendation 2:</i> Clarify key roles: a) Hub steering committees provide strategic research direction in accordance with national priorities and ensure the alignment of activities and research to user needs <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Hub steering committees are strategic not governing committees and should not endorse hub financial reports. b) Hub leaders lead translation of national priorities to projects and are unambiguously responsible for hub performance including cross-hub activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Hub leaders determine what, if any, role the initiatives should play.○ Hubs leaders to avoid any perception of conflict of interests if leading projects c) When engaging, the department clarify whether it is as a research user, a custodian of broader interests or as program manager.	The Department: (a) Accepts this recommendation (b) Accepts this recommendation in part. In line with the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, Hubs are required to deliver cross-cutting research through the initiatives. (c) Accepts this recommendation
<i>Recommendation 3:</i> Reform the following processes: a) Emerging priorities to fund only urgent projects, require a set-aside by hubs of 5% of NESP funds and enable approval of projects by the department.	The Department: (a) Accepts this recommendation in principle. The Department will consider reducing the set-aside in

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<p>b) Enable and document the process for hubs to receive additional funding from outside NESP.</p> <p>c) Extend the period during which hubs may undertake projects to mid-2027.</p>	<p>later years of the program if necessary.</p> <p>(b) Accepts this recommendation in principle</p> <p>(c) Accepts this recommendation</p>
<p><i>Recommendation 4:</i> Develop a performance framework that:</p> <p>a) Covers all levels of the program</p> <p>b) Defines expectations and articulates criteria for success</p> <p>c) Informs adaptive management</p> <p>d) Provides insight on how best to maximise shorter- and longer-term impacts, including the scale and transfer of project outcomes</p> <p>e) Meets the Commonwealth Performance Framework requirements.</p>	<p>The Department accepts this recommendation</p>
<p><i>Recommendation 5:</i> Leadership on strategic research directions, the involvement of users and in relation to projects should come from the leaders employed by the program:</p> <p>a) Hub steering committees providing strategic research direction, including definition of national priorities.</p> <p>b) Hub leaders leading research planning, codesign & project delivery.</p> <p>c) Chairs of hub steering committees jointly updating the minister 2-3 times per year on strategic issues, opportunities and risks.</p> <p>d) A Strategic Leadership Committee, led by hub steering committee chairs and with hub leaders and senior departmental program leadership as members, created to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commission and agree a fit for purpose performance framework ○ Oversee continuous improvement of the program ○ Address longer term structural challenges including clarity about goals and users, scaling and transferring knowledge projects to other locations, domains or users; pathways to impact beyond direct user involvement ○ Drive implementation of this Review. 	<p>The Department:</p> <p>(a) Accepts this recommendation in part. The Australian Government is the appropriate body for setting national priorities.</p> <p>(b) Accepts this recommendation</p> <p>(c) Accepts that Steering Committee chairs are free to approach the Minister for such an arrangement, for which the Department can provide administrative support</p> <p>(d) Accepts this recommendation in part. The Department is the appropriate body to commission the performance framework.</p>

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<p><i>Recommendation 6:</i> The department focus upon its three leadership roles:</p> <p>a) Senior departmental program leadership to champion the program internally including setting internal expectations, building systems and fostering a culture to benefit from research.</p> <p>b) Line areas to systematically identify policy and program needs and, where these are translated into projects, engage in projects with senior executive support.</p> <p>c) The program administration team to lead delivery of the administrative requirements of the program as outlined in the grant guidelines and: revive the NESP 1 philosophy of 'earned autonomy'; maximise engagement and impact through knowledge brokering and communications; automate reporting to lower the administrative burden on hubs; revise guidance to incorporate the recommendations of this Review; investigate a curated knowledge portal; and support hubs and steering committees.</p>	<p>The Department:</p> <p>(a) Accepts this recommendation in principle</p> <p>(b) Accepts this recommendation in principle</p> <p>(c) Accepts this recommendation in principle</p>

More information

Learn more about the [National Environmental Science Program](#)

Email NESP@environment.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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