



National Environmental Science Program (NESP) Mid-Term Evaluation Final Report Recommendations and Departmental Response

The Mid-Term Evaluation of the National Environmental Science Program (NESP), undertaken by independent consultants, Charterpoint, provides two recommendations. The Department of the Environment and Energy (the Department) broadly agrees with these recommendations and will consider the guidance offered by the evaluation report in the ongoing management of the program.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the Department's engagement with the NESP hubs by establishing a clear and coordinated voice for communicating research priorities and enhancing the Department's role as a key end-user.

- a) Establish an Environmental Science Committee (ESC) to provide leadership of the national environmental science discourse. The suggested membership and terms of reference are shown in Attachment B. Refer to Q3 and Q5c.
- b) Create an Environmental Science Research Policy function to support the Department to engage with the national environmental science agenda. The suggested focus areas are shown in Attachment B. Refer to Q3 and Q5c.
- c) Develop a NESP Collaboration and Initiative Fund, with contributions from existing hub funding, to support collaborative projects and initiatives identified and approved by the ESC. Refer to Q5b and Q5f.
- d) Review and update the Department and hub risk plans for consistency and inclusion of risk relating to engagement of Department policy makers and oversight by the ESC. Refer to Q6e.

Agree. The Department recognises that providing a coordinated voice and enhancing our role as an end user will strengthen environmental outcomes from NESP research.

The Department will consider the proposal to establish an Environmental Science Committee and Environmental Science Research Policy function, as well as other possible approaches, to establish a clear and coordinated voice for the Department with the NESP Hubs, and provide leadership in engaging with the broader environmental science agenda.

The NESP provides a unique structure to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and several existing projects span multiple Hubs. The idea of a NESP Collaboration and Initiative Fund will be explored as the Department considers a program structure for a possible future environmental research program to commence in 2021.

The Department regularly reviews and updates the NESP Risk Register. The Hubs are required to submit Risk Assessment and Treatment Plans with their biannual milestones, and these are similarly reviewed for new or changed risks. The relevant risk plans will be reviewed and updated as part of implementing any changes to the management of the program.

Recommendation 2: Expand the Science Partnerships Section’s focus on knowledge brokering and communication to better support Department end-users as well as potential end-users within the general community.

- a) Commence a change management program to enable the Science Partnerships Section to adopt a knowledge brokering and communication focus to better manage the Department’s expectations as an end-user and to better align with the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan’s original requirements. Refer to Q5b.
- b) Develop and build the NESP portal to improve access to and discoverability of NESP-funded research outputs as well as supporting proactive information dissemination. This central repository would include outputs from NESP’s predecessors. The NESP portal would support end-users currently engaged with NESP as well as potential end-users in the broader community. Refer to Q1c.
- c) Put in place an overall NESP Knowledge Brokering and Communication Strategy Plan which includes exploring alternative formats to improve the usability of research products. Refer to Q2d.
- d) Focus on engaging the end-users within the Department, including the formation of a Department of the Environment and Energy End Users Forum. The suggested membership and terms of reference are shown in Attachment B. Refer to Q3 and Q5c.

The Science Partnerships Section is increasing the emphasis of its existing knowledge brokering function to support the take-up of research as more projects are now being completed by the Hubs. The Science Partnerships Section has developed a NESP Knowledge Brokering and Communication Strategy to support this, which includes actions to improve engagement with end-users within the Department.

The Department agrees there is a need to improve access to and discoverability of research data and products funded by NESP. The Department will work with the Hubs and end-users to implement an appropriate solution.