

# Establishing the Australian Access Federation (AAF)

## Abstract

Sharing data, systems and research infrastructure, in a secure way, between different Australian Research Organisations, such as universities and research agencies presents a difficult problem, both technically and from a policy perspective. There is a lack of technical methods and little or no policy framework to support sharing between organisations, even once technical challenges are overcome. This lack of a framework means that most data and systems arising from Australian research are not easily able to be shared, leading to poor returns on investment from research funding and very limited opportunities for collaboration between researchers.

The collaborative nature of e-Research and much of the activity that is envisaged under NCRIS will be significantly dependent on the ability to share data, systems and research infrastructure between research organisations both within Australia and internationally. Solving this problem is, therefore, essential to enable the objectives of NCRIS and e-Research.

Technical advances provide a new solution to secure sharing of data and systems using a “Trust Federation”. A Trust Federation is a combination of policies and technologies that allows individuals across many different organisations to securely share and analyse data within a trusted environment.

Recently, the Australian Government provided funding of approximately \$4.8m for a project to develop a Trust Federation for the Australian Higher Education and Research sector, to be called the Australian Access Federation (AAF), with the aim of facilitating trusted electronic communications and collaboration between higher education and research institutions both locally and internationally. It is being lead by the University of Queensland with Macquarie University and AusCERT as partners. The federation will support a range of services, including authentication, and builds substantially on the work undertaken by two existing DEST funded projects. These are the e-Security Framework project, based at the University of Queensland, and the MAMS (Meta Access Management System project), based at Macquarie University.

This paper will discuss the approach to be taken in establishing the Australian Access Federation (AAF).

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