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The Higher Education Technology Agenda

Behind the Cloud – The challenges and solutions in developing a nationwide world class support for NeCTAR services.

The National eResearch Collaboration Tools and Resources (NeCTAR) Project is an Australian Government project funded under the Super Science initiative enabled Australian researchers access to cloud compute and storage infrastructure. The NeCTAR Research Cloud comprises 8 regional sites (Nodes) operating as a federation of Cells within a single national cloud fabric. At completion the Research Cloud will provide up to 30,000CPU cores of capacity to the Australian research community.

Providing user support for the research cloud presents some challenges. In particular, the user base is nationwide, cross-institutional, have varying levels of technical knowledge and operate twenty four hours a day. Furthermore, user based relationships are often managed at Node level or through individual research institutions. Ensuring that sustainable and adequate user support is available is important to the quality perception of research based cloud services and to supporting Australian research.

These challenges will be met through a funded program which aims to provide world-class user support for NeCTAR services. The program of activity will significantly enhance support at all support levels (Tier 0 to 3) by: investing in the development, upkeep and renewal of Tier 0 support materials; providing shared multi-tenanted, ITIL compliant and contemporary IT service management systems (ITSM); developing a nationally distributed Tier 2 help desk with out of hours support; and developing service level objectives for user support requests.

This session will detail the challenges and highlight solutions in developing a distributed national support service for NeCTAR services. It will provide details of the service developed and how the support model employed can provide additional value to institutional help desks and user support functions. The session will provide some detail on the NeCTAR research

cloud and features offered to the Australian research community.

Hamish Holewa,^{sup>1}, Nick Golovachenko² and Sarah Nisbet³

¹Queensland Cyber Infrastructure Foundation (QCIF), ²NeCTAR and ³eResearch SA

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