

MEDIA RELEASE

ANAO REPORT REINFORCES NEED FOR LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN NATIONAL RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

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The release of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report on the [Department of Education's Administration of the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy](#) (NCRIS) reinforces NCRIS' vital role for Australia's research system and the need for stronger governance, predictable investment and long-term planning to ensure it continues delivering for the nation.

STA Chief Executive Officer Ryan Winn said the report highlights the enormous value NCRIS delivers across the economy and community, supporting research and capability that directly benefits Australians.

"NCRIS supports the infrastructure and capability behind advances in health, agriculture, environmental management, advanced technologies and national resilience – and not just for academics but also a broad range of industry users. This is not simply a research-sector cost – it is a productivity and public-good investment for Australia," Mr Winn said.

The ANAO report identified shortcomings in the implementation of the 2021 NCRIS Roadmaps and highlighted governance, planning and evaluation challenges that must be addressed through the new Roadmap currently under development.

"The findings make clear that strong governance for NCRIS and long-term planning are essential for research infrastructure systems of this scale and complexity," Mr Winn said.

"The next Roadmap process, due to be delivered in late 2026, is a critical opportunity to strengthen implementation and ensure NCRIS remains fit for purpose in an increasingly competitive and technology-driven world."

STA said a number of the issues identified in the report are likely linked to significant capability losses within the responsible department over recent years, including a substantial reduction in staffing.

"Research infrastructure policy and investment require deep expertise, sophisticated planning and ongoing engagement with the sector," Mr Winn said.

"When departmental capability is reduced, it inevitably affects the quality, timeliness and impact of decision-making. Rebuilding that capability must be part of the solution."

STA welcomed the ANAO's acknowledgement of recommendations from the [Ambitious Australia report](#) calling for ongoing funding to support the sustainability of NCRIS and enhanced governance for national research infrastructure.

"Research infrastructure cannot operate effectively on short or uncertain funding cycles," Mr Winn said.

"These facilities require long planning horizons, specialist workforce capability and coordinated co-investment across institutions and jurisdictions. Predictable, sustained funding is essential."

While welcoming the ANAO's detailed examination of NCRIS funding processes, STA cautioned against viewing the program through a conventional competitive grants lens.

"The value of NCRIS comes from building coordinated collaborative national capability – not duplicating expensive infrastructure across multiple institutions," Mr Winn said.

"The key question is not which host organisation wins funding, but whether Australia is investing in the right capabilities to meet national needs. Competition already occurs between investment priorities within capability areas as they decide on the locations, equipment or partners, not through unnecessary duplication of infrastructure and governance structures."

Mr Winn said the report comes at a pivotal moment for Australia's research and innovation system, following the release of the *Ambitious Australia* report and ahead of key decisions about long-term R&D investment and capability.

"Australia has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen its research and innovation system," he said.

"NCRIS is foundational to that ambition. With the right investment, governance and long-term vision, it will continue to deliver economic, technological and societal benefits for decades to come."

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