

MEDIA RELEASE

BIRD FLU, CLEANER SHIPPING AND LIFE-CHANGING HEARING IMPLANTS: 20 YEARS OF NCRIS

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Helping Australia respond to the threat of bird flu. Cutting emissions from global shipping. Restoring hearing to hundreds of thousands of people. For two decades, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) has powered the discoveries and innovations that improve Australians' lives.

As NCRIS marks its 20th anniversary, Science & Technology Australia (STA) is celebrating the national research infrastructure network that has become the backbone of Australian science and innovation, and a true bipartisan economic success story.

Among the many achievements enabled by NCRIS are:

- **Protecting Australia from emerging diseases** – As Australia responds to the threat of H5N1 avian influenza, NCRIS-supported genomics, bioinformatics and supercomputing infrastructure is helping researchers rapidly analyse virus genomes, strengthen national disease surveillance and support Australia's biosecurity response.
- **Greener global shipping** – Using long-term observations from the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS), data from the Australian Ocean Data Network and research voyages aboard the Marine National Facility research vessel RV Investigator, UNSW researchers developed AI-powered technology. It helps cargo ships harness ocean currents to reduce fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions by up to 20 per cent. The research has been commercialised through Australian spin-out company CounterCurrent.
- **Cochlear implants transforming lives** – Cochlear has helped more than 750,000 people globally regain hearing. The company has relied on NCRIS-supported advanced microscopy and surprising use of geoscience infrastructure. The same mass spectrometry technologies developed for rock analysis supported Cochlear researchers to measure trace metal concentrations in electrode technologies.

STA President Jas Chambers said NCRIS demonstrates the power of coordinated long-term investment in research and innovation”.

“For 20 years, NCRIS has provided Australian researchers, businesses and innovators with access to world-class facilities, expertise, data and technology that no single institution could build or maintain alone,” Ms Chambers said.

“The result is a remarkable return on investment for Australia – breakthroughs in health and medicine, stronger industries, better environmental management, advanced manufacturing capability

and discoveries that improve lives here and around the world. NCRIS delivers jobs and prosperity for everyday Australians – and drives the R&D and innovation that underpins our national resilience."

NCRIS has grown into a nationally coordinated network supporting 26 major research infrastructure projects across fields including health, agriculture, astronomy, environmental science, advanced manufacturing and digital technologies.

The anniversary comes at a critical time for Australia's research and development system, following the release of the [Ambitious Australia report](#), which called for a more strategic, coordinated and long-term approach to national investment in research and innovation.

Ms Chambers said NCRIS exemplifies the kind of whole-of-system thinking championed by the report.

"Ambitious Australia made clear that Australia needs a stronger and more connected research and development system if we are to improve productivity, grow new industries and compete globally," Ms Chambers said.

"NCRIS is one of the clearest examples of what that looks like in practice. It brings together universities, industry, government agencies and researchers around shared national capability. Government investment is maximised by leveraging co-contributions from state and territory governments and universities."

With strong support and deep investments from both sides of Government for the past two decades, NCRIS has supported thousands of researchers and businesses, providing access to everything from supercomputers, telescopes, and microscopes, environmental sensing networks to national data platforms, research vessels and specialist technical expertise.

"As the Australian Government considers the recommendations of Ambitious Australia and the next National Research Infrastructure Roadmap, the lesson from NCRIS is clear: long-term strategic investment in research infrastructure delivers lasting benefits for our economy, our industries and our communities."

The NCRIS@20 program showcases the discoveries, technologies, industries and partnerships made possible through two decades of nationally coordinated research infrastructure – and insights into what could be possible next.

For event information and the full NCRIS@20 program, visit www.ncris20.org.au.

Media note

STA members who contribute to NCRIS include:

- [Astronomy Australia Ltd](#)
- [AuScope](#)
- [Australian Access Federation](#)
- [ACCESS-NRI](#)

- [Australian National Fabrication Facility](#)
- [Australian Research Data Commons](#)
- [Bioplatforms Australia](#)
- [Heavy Ion Accelerators](#)
- [Integrated Marine Observing System](#)
- [Microscopy Australia](#)
- [National Computational Infrastructure](#)
- [Pawsey Supercomputing Centre](#)
- [Phenomics Australia](#)
- [Population Health Research Network](#)
- [Therapeutic Innovation Australia](#)
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About Science & Technology Australia

Science & Technology Australia is the nation's peak body representing more than 235,000 scientists and technologists. We're the leading policy voice on science and technology. Our flagship programs include [Science Meets Parliament](#), [Science Meets the Economy](#) and [Superstars of STEM](#).

Media contact: Paul Richards - media@sta.org.au or 0412 145 905