

# National research infrastructure investment in HASS – draft consultation report

Interviewees were selected for their expertise in the humanities and social sciences sector in Australia, including a mix of representatives from universities and national institutions.

Stakeholders were sent a copy of the dandolo HASS NRI discussion and consultation paper, which included the draft framework and several questions for consideration ahead of the consultations. While stakeholders were able to provide any feedback they wished, they were all specifically asked for their views on:

- The categorisation of the problem.
- The definition of HASS NRI.
- The functional changes and outcomes that HASS NRI could generate.
- The evaluative criteria.

In addition, stakeholders were asked to identify any good examples of previous HASS NRI investment, or identify proposals that may be worthy of future investment. These examples are summarised and supplemented with desktop research into appendix 1 of the National Research Infrastructure Investments in Humanities and Social Sciences discussion paper.

In general, the framework and the paper were strongly supported. No single stakeholder took significant issue with either, but many did make suggestions for improvement, particularly around the definition of the problem and the evaluative criteria. The discussion paper has been revised substantially in response to these suggestions, though not all of them were supported.

This document summarises the themes arising from all consultations, but most importantly captures refinements to the framework and strategic points to consider if investment in HASS NRI is progressed. The write-ups of all individual consultations are also available. The HASS NRI stakeholders consulted and included in this report are:

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Table 1 below provides both a summary of feedback by discussion document elements and a summary of broader issues raised by stakeholders that have implications for contextual positioning and the upcoming scoping study.

**Table 1 Synthesis of interviews**

Category of issue	Key points raised by interviewees	Proposed treatment
<b>Discussion document elements</b>		
Characterisation of the problem (p2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Include discussion of the sector’s capacity problems right up front.</b> This includes differences in capability between humanities and social sciences. Without acknowledging this, it’s impossible to make progress.</li> <li>• <b>Include discussion about the desired outcome up front,</b> namely for valuable NRI that makes Australian research more impactful and competitive.</li> <li>• <b>Include discussion about infrastructure being an important lever for unlocking the take-up of more modern methodologies.</b></li> <li>• <b>Include discussion about how infrastructure supports the changing nature of research,</b> namely the switch from single discipline solo research to multi-discipline, multi-researcher collaborative teams.</li> <li>• <b>Include discussion about the need to have expectations of dollar value calibrated between applicants and funding bodies,</b> because HASS NRI proposals usually won’t be of a similar funding scale to other sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to bulleted list under ‘HASS also has some issues to overcome’ on first slide</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added an opening paragraph to explain the benefits of NRI and the desired outcome.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added point about how NRI helps to unlock innovation to new opening paragraph, which explains the benefits of NRI.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added point about how NRI increases collaboration to the new opening paragraph, which explains the benefits of NRI.</li> <li>• Agree. Added point about the scale of investment likely being different to the opening section.</li> </ul>

<p>Definition (p3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Make the definition of HASS NRI as broad as possible.</b> HASS is different. The sector is not curing cancer or developing new materials, for example. Instead, it is about discovering new, valuable things about ourselves and society.</li> <li>• <b>Stop using the term HASS interchangeably through the document.</b> HASS is a category, not a discipline, yet the document uses interchangeably.</li> <li>• <b>Make the place of national galleries, libraries and museums more explicit in the Venn diagram,</b> probably through a more expansive definition of the 'national HASS institutes' circle.</li> <li>• <b>Remove psychology and cognitive sciences from the list of HASS disciplines.</b> This will make the list consistent with Australian Research Council and Academy of the Humanities.</li> <li>• <b>Add Indigenous research as a standalone discipline in list of HASS disciplines.</b> And preferably make it Indigenous controlled.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Revised entire document. Removed several references to 'HASS discipline' (singular) and changed these to 'area', which is consistent with other parts of the document. Left references to 'HASS disciplines' (plural) as is, because these seemed fine.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added "including galleries, libraries and museums" to Venn diagram, right side box.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo removed.</li> <li>• Agree with including as a standalone. Do not agree with listing it as Indigenous controlled. Dandolo to revise.</li> </ul>
<p>Types of infrastructure being sought (p4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>While broadly supported by most, the inclusion of 'people' as a form of NRI was explicitly not supported by one stakeholder and they suggested it be removed.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not agree.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Better explain the scope of people ('wet') infrastructure, because it is not immediately clear.</b></li> <li>• <b>Broaden digital to clearly include data, software and services.</b> Data, in particular, should be far more prominent.</li> </ul>	<p>Added 'including capability building' to broaden people ('wet') infrastructure in first box of 'describing investments' page.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added 'data and software' to broaden digital (soft) infrastructure in first box of 'describing investments' page.</li> </ul>
Kinds of functional change enabled (p4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Add other examples to direct functional changes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increases in speed and efficiency.</li> <li>○ Acceleration of discovery.</li> <li>○ Aggregation of effort.</li> <li>○ Standardisation and convergence.</li> <li>○ Reduction in duplication of effort.</li> <li>○ Increase in interdisciplinary work and collaboration.</li> <li>○ Discovery of new problem-solving approaches and methods.</li> <li>○ Furthering of the 'open science' agenda.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added these to second box of 'describing investments' page, some explicitly and some more broadly though consolidation of the existing list.</li> </ul>
Outcomes generated beyond social, economic or cultural. Other examples? (p4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Add other examples to outcomes listed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Better government decision making.</li> <li>○ Stronger sector.</li> <li>○ Greater impact of investment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Consider adding indirect, exploratory outcomes, such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discoveries through increased access and use (open source, hackathons, etc).</li> <li>○ Leveraging of NRI into commercial products and services.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to third box of 'describing investments' page.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to third box of 'describing investments' page.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consider adding ‘environmental’ as another outcome area.</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider adding ‘quality of life’ as another outcome area.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to third box of ‘describing investments’ page.</li> <li>• Do not agree, already captured within existing outcomes. No action</li> </ul>
<p>Envisage proposals that meet criteria (p5)</p> <p>Remove / add / changes to criteria (p5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Re-think the concept of ‘hurdle’ criteria, or at least revise the existing criteria</b>, because it is highly unlikely any proposal would meet all of the hurdle criteria as currently constituted.</li> <li>• <b>Add criteria around track record of delivery, given how vital this is to delivering large-scale, nationally significant projects.</b></li> <li>• <b>Add criteria (or amend the access criteria) to include a commitment to common terms and definitions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Add a point about governance to the criteria</b>, because quality management is a key to minimising risk and unlocking potential.</li> <li>• <b>Add criteria – probably to the evaluative criteria – that considers whether a proposal is linked to one of the national research priorities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider removing co-investment as a criteria.</b> It is far harder to secure co investment in HASS than it is in STEM, for example. It is reasonable to expect universities to contribute, but there’s very little private investment and limited ability to commercialise.</li> <li>• <b>Consider softening the requirement for interdisciplinary applications in the hurdle criteria</b>, because there’s lots of things in other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially agree. Keeping hurdle criteria, with some revisions. Revisions made.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to evaluative criteria.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to revised ‘access’ hurdle criteria.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to new ‘implementation plan’ evaluative criteria</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Added to re-worked ‘nationally/internationally significant’ evaluative criteria.</li> <li>• Do not agree.</li> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Revised first hurdle criteria to be ‘and/or’.</li> </ul>

	<p>sectors that are funded as single-discipline projects and conceivable that useful things will emerge for single HASS disciplines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>As an alternative to removing co-investment, broaden the criteria to make it clear that non-financial contributions are also acceptable</b>, such as partnerships, co creation, in-kind. Might only get partnership and in-kind initially, but can later make financial partnerships for use of the NRI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree. Dandolo to revise. Revised 'co-investment' to make it clear that non-financial contributions can also be factored in.</li> </ul>
<b>Context and scope questions</b>		
Enabling policy, regulation and openness of government data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A huge factor in leveraging NRI successfully is adjacent policy settings. For example, policy that requires research data to be made available and accessible unless there are exceptional circumstances. An example of this is Norway.</li> <li>• Alongside the need for investment in HASS NRI is a need for government to be the exemplar when it comes to open access to data. By and large, the most interesting data for researchers is still locked down. For example, we can access public toilet mapping, but not de-identified personal records. Look to Scandinavia for model of ideal situation.</li> </ul>	Department to consider as part of scoping paper and development of application process.
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the state of the sector, the sector might need a different process to allocate HASS NRI funding than the hard sciences, at least at the start.</li> <li>• Rather than an open call for submissions, there might need to be a hand holding process with the sector to help them come up with proposals at scale that could be funded – a 'pump priming', of sorts.</li> </ul>	Department to consider as part of scoping paper and development of application process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These seed projects could be a first step to proving the outcomes of HASS NRI investment. They could be followed by larger scale projects.</li> </ul>	
Assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has always been an issue of people from the STEM disciplines not readily being able to understand proposals from the HASS disciplines. Assessment panels of hard scientists don't recognise or understand HASS proposals, and HASS proposals are competing with proposals containing things they do understand.</li> <li>• STEM proposals generally fit a standard template better and, because of this, can be compared against one another more readily. It is very difficult to present compelling HASS proposals within a STEM or medical style evaluation process/criteria and come out on top.</li> <li>• One solution is including some powerful HASS advocates on decision making body, or creating a completely standalone sub-committee of HASS experts tasked with making recommendations to the ultimate decision-making body.</li> </ul>	Department to consider as part of scoping paper and development of application process.
Sector capacity and human capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'kit' is important, but the sector also lacks capacity and individuals lack capability to take advantage of HASS NRI.</li> <li>• Because there's been very little investment in infrastructure in HASS disciplines aside from libraries, the sector is starting from a very low base.</li> <li>• The sector isn't ready to do the same kind of things the hard sciences can do in an open call for bids for significant amounts of funding.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Scope question. Discussed with Department on 23 May 2019.</p> <p>Capacity/capability building on pieces of infrastructure can be in scope, but basic workforce skills building is a sector responsibility. Dandolo to revise.</p> <p>Added discussion of sector capability in the up-front narrative / problem definition and also made clearer the distinction of 'wet' infrastructure.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When government has asked, the sector has thrown up small-dollar, single-discipline proposals that generally governments aren't interested in funding.</li> <li>• To fully realise benefits/outcomes of HASS NRI, need investment in sector capacity and human capability.</li> <li>• Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enormous size of sector</li> <li>○ Disparate views of what is needed.</li> <li>○ Lack of organisation.</li> <li>○ Lack of overall human capability.</li> <li>○ Lack of collaborative culture. HASS researchers are more typically 'lone wolves' than scientists due to different nature of the work</li> <li>○ Lack of shared tools and data standards.</li> <li>○ Small scale, single discipline mindset.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The issues don't apply uniformly. There are differences between humanities and social sciences.</li> <li>• Sector needs to put this work in, with help and investment of government. Without this, impossible to fully leverage NRI.</li> <li>• This change will also take time. It's reasonable to expect sector to 'gets its act together' but also need to be patient.</li> </ul>	
Investment in new versus expanding, consolidating or retaining existing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be a balance between the two and the framework needs to be able to accommodate both.</li> <li>• When considering existing NRI, value and significance is the key. Not all collections are important enough to invest in.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Scope question. Discussed with Department on 23 May 2019. Process to take an agnostic approach to new versus existing, with any HASS NRI investment required to demonstrate value. Dandolo to revise.</p> <p>Included assumptions in footnotes of evaluation criteria that included that</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HASS sector is also quite poor at auditing its existing investment and stocks of research infrastructure.</li> <li>• Some key principles for investing in existing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Institutions are unwilling or unable to maintain something of value, and of national significance.</li> <li>○ Institutions are unable to scale/combine ephemera that, when combined, has value as NRI.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>existing investments will be periodically re-assessed in competition with new investments.</p>
<p>Open access or high achievers in field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is vital to set expectations and policy about government's access expectations in the event of HASS NRI funding.</li> <li>• Researchers often work alone, are protective of data, make access needlessly difficult, and poor at collaborating.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Scope question. Discussed with Department on 23 May 2019. Level of access to be considered on a case by case basis.</p>
<p>Indigenous research as an integrated or standalone discipline and/or application stream</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was significant discussion that Indigenous research should be listed as its own standalone discipline, or otherwise have its own application stream, and that either should be Indigenous controlled.</li> <li>• There was a view that, currently, Indigenous data and research is buried or subsumed by non-Indigenous dominated HASS as a whole, and potentially the same would happen when it comes to HASS NRI investment.</li> <li>• This stifles the potential to do good work, develop tangible outcomes, and develop and nurture specific expertise and young talent is lost to the broader sector.</li> <li>• Indigenous stakeholders also have very different ideas about priorities and potential investments as opposed to the broader HASS sector.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Scope question. Discussed with Department on 23 May 2019. Fine to list Indigenous as a standalone discipline, but Indigenous controlled is not supported.</p>

