



futurearth
AUSTRALIA

Annual
progress
report
2017

About Future Earth

Future Earth— research for global sustainability

Future Earth is a major international research platform providing the knowledge and support to accelerate transformations to a sustainable world.

Launched in 2015, Future Earth is a global initiative to advance sustainability science, build capacity in this rapidly expanding area of research and provide an international research agenda to guide natural and social scientists working around the world. It is also a platform for international engagement to ensure that knowledge is generated in partnership with society and users of science.

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Future Earth Australia (FEA) is part of a global sustainability initiative that facilitates collaboration between Australian scientists, governments, businesses and non-government organisations involved in sustainability programs and research. FEA is part of the international Future Earth initiative, and provide essential services as an international platform to Australian scientists for deep engagement with leaders in research, policy, business, industry and the community to generate solutions to sustainability challenges.

Future Earth Australia aims to:

- coordinate and leverage research relevant to the eight focal challenges identified by Future Earth
- link the expertise of networks of researchers with policy-makers, business leaders, industry, practitioners and community stakeholders, and facilitate interdisciplinary activities and partnerships to collaboratively produce solutions-oriented research.

- deliver research products and services including convening a periodic Future Earth Australia conference, and linking Australian and regional activities to Future Earth internationally.
- contribute to knowledge and solutions that will support transformations to global sustainability.

Priority areas of focus include:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- cities
- energy
- water
- climate change
- ecosystem services
- biodiversity
- environmental–economic accounting.

“The Australian Academy of Science proudly hosts Future Earth Australia. Future Earth Australia has a crucial role to play in the generation of enduring solutions to address the most urgent sustainability challenges facing humanity.

“Australia can be an important contributor to global research initiatives aimed at ensuring the future of our planet. Future Earth Australia represents a great opportunity to become part of international attempts to protect and sustain our planet.

“Australia’s future hinges on our research excellence in environment and sustainability. Over the past year, Future Earth Australia has established itself as a central mechanism for enhancing Australia’s global position as a leader in such research, and in applying that knowledge for our national benefit.

“I am pleased to see significant inroads made by Future Earth Australia in establishing itself within the sustainability science community in Australia. Future Earth is a global initiative, championed by the International Council of Science, which is now finding its place within the Australian scientific community.

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Overview

Following a scoping process involving Fellows of each of Australia's learned academies and supported by the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) during 2015 and 2016, the Australian Academy of Science launched Future Earth Australia in November 2016 and appointed Dr Imran Ahmad as Director of Future Earth Australia.

Our activity over the first year of operation focused on establishing the program, implementing a governance framework, engaging with key stakeholders in Australia and internationally, coordinating activities, and developing a business model for future operations.

Program establishment

A focus during the first year of operation was establishment of strong relationships with key people and organisations in Australia and internationally. We spent significant time meeting with a wide variety of stakeholders in Australia, Asia, Europe and North America.

We finalised the governance model that involves Fellows of each of the learned academies, developed a business plan and membership model, and established partnership and collaboration arrangements with key organisations.

We also engaged with multiple Canberra-based Embassies and High Commissions, and ran a successful policy roundtable on Australia's participation in the Belmont Forum.

Our supporters

Hosted by the Australian Academy of Science, the establishment of Future Earth Australia would not have been possible without the financial support of our members including CSIRO, the Australian National University, the University of Queensland, Macquarie University and the University of Sydney. Our membership is growing with Griffith University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Deakin University, the University of Adelaide (Environment Institute) and the University of New South Wales joining recently. The contributions of all our supporters are greatly valued.

[Find out more about membership and partnership with Future Earth Australia](#)

Governance

We established a governance model that includes a Management Committee (previously constituted as a steering committee) and an Advisory Council.

The Management Committee provides strategy and operational guidance and is comprised of senior scientists and Fellows of Learned Academies, an early- or mid-career researcher, experts from industry, and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative. The Management Committee is chaired by Professor Steve Dovers FASSA.

The Advisory Council provides strategic guidance and advice to the program. It is comprised of senior academics and industry and government stakeholders and is chaired by Professor Ian Chubb AC FAA FTSE. It met for the first time in September.

Stakeholder engagement and consultation

NATIONAL

To build national support for Future Earth Australia we organised meetings with key stakeholders between December and June in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart. As a result, a number of

high-level officials joined Future Earth Australia's Advisory Council or Management Committee, and expressed interest in potentially joining us as a member or partner. Key engagements included:

- an update on Future Earth Australia to a meeting of the Australian Council of Environmental Deans and Directors in April, who represent 30 Australian universities
- the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in May with Monash University involving collaboration on the Sustainable Development Goals with the Australia/Pacific Regional Network of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (a global initiative for the United Nations).

This broad national engagement is continuing in South Australia and Western Australia.

INTERNATIONAL

We also consulted with international programs and stakeholders to help position Future Earth Australia as a key broker of global sustainability linkages for the Oceania region. We:

- attended the Future Earth Asian regional meeting in Kyoto Japan in January 2017, with funding to cover the Director's participation costs

- met with the Director-General Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), during which collaborative links between Future Earth Australia and GGGI were explored. A discussion paper was then submitted to GGGI to consider offering placements to Australian and Oceania early-career researchers and postgraduate students to undertake research projects on sustainability
- initiated potential collaboration discussions on an early-career researchers exchange with Germany, with several organisations identified for follow-up discussions
- engaged with Future Earth, whose Regional Centre Director, Professor Hein Malle (based in Kyoto) visited Australia in September followed by a visit by its Global Hub Director, Professor Fumiko Kasuga in early November
- discussed potential collaboration with the Future Cities Laboratory (Singapore based) in August, covering future activity-based research collaboration on cities. Future Earth Australia undertook to identify experts within the Future Earth network to share their vision and explore opportunities for a future collaboration with Future Cities Laboratory, with follow-up meetings planned
- participated in the ICSU General Assembly and the Belmont Forum Asia-Pacific meeting in Taipei in October. In the Belmont Forum, the Director FEA participated as part of a panel on global environment change issues for the Asia-Pacific.

SUPPORTING EARLY-CAREER RESEARCHERS AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

We signed an agreement with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), to provide up to 10 placements a year for early-career researchers and postgraduate students to pursue

research placements with GGGI for three or six months at one of GGGI's offices around the world. This will bring a huge opportunity for postgraduate students, early-career researchers, scientists and practitioners to pursue research on green growth and sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY ENGAGEMENTS

We partnered in the EcoCity Summit in July, convened by the University of Melbourne, at which the former US Vice-President Al Gore was a keynote speaker. We helped in program design and communication, and the FEA Director chaired a session.

We were associated with National Science Week in August, assisting in the development of a Future Earth teacher resource book produced by the Australian Science Teachers Association, and are helping to build global awareness of this valuable resource.

We participated in the Young Australians Plan for the Planet, led by the Australian National University and Questacon, that was launched during National Science Week. We are now building global linkages for the project.

We organised an information session for embassies and Australian Government departments in June in collaboration with others at the Australian Academy of Science. The session was attended by senior departmental executives and senior diplomats and was chaired by Academy Vice President Dr TJ Higgins. It covered the breadth of Future Earth Australia through global projects and activities undertaken by Australian scientists.

BELMONT FORUM

We arranged a series of meetings with the Office of the Chief Scientist and others to discuss options for Australia's involvement in the Belmont Forum.

The Belmont Forum is a group of the world's major and emerging funders of global environmental change research. It aims to accelerate delivery of the environmental research needed to remove critical barriers to sustainability by aligning and mobilising international resources. It pursues the goals set in the Belmont Challenge by adding value to existing national investments and supporting international partnerships in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific endeavours.

As a result of this work, we organised a Belmont Forum Roundtable in September with key stakeholders from government and the research, private and community sectors, chaired by Professor Ian Chubb. The senior executives of the Belmont Forum in the US attended the event and follow-up meetings organised with deputy secretaries of the departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Environment and Energy; Education and Training; and Industry, Innovation and Science; and the Shadow Minister for Environment and Water. A communiqué was released following the roundtable, detailing the way forward.

BUSINESS MODEL

We produced a business plan and membership prospectus, and engaged with current and prospective member organisations to secure ongoing support and membership over time.

We anticipate that revenue to support Future Earth Australia operations will comprise a mix of membership fees and partnerships. The new membership model includes member tiers at \$30,000 p.a. for institutions (academic, large businesses and government departments) and \$10,000 p.a. for schools, government departments and not-for-profits, as well as scope to negotiate more substantial partnerships.