



# Research Partnerships Strategy 2017–2020

Working together to achieve our knowledge needs





## Our vision

OEH will have harmonious, high-quality collaborative research partnerships filling our knowledge needs.

The **NSW Office of Environment and Heritage** (OEH) has a long history of research collaborations with universities, other areas of government, research institutions and the private sector. These arrangements have facilitated, and continue to facilitate, collaboration in science, education and research in fields of mutual interest, and deliver the knowledge needed to inform policies and programs. There are many mutual benefits and, when done well, such collaborations can deliver substantially better outcomes for the NSW Government, partners and the community.

Where there are compatible priorities these research partnerships can contribute to strategic directions and priorities of OEH and the **NSW Environment Protection Authority** (EPA). The **Knowledge Strategy** sets out the priority knowledge needs of OEH and EPA. The **Research Partnerships Strategy** directly supports the Knowledge Strategy.

The Research Partnerships Strategy is guided by the NSW Public Service Commission Collaboration Framework (2013) and underpins other OEH strategies and programs. Its aim is to deliver quality research to base our decisions on.

OEH and research partners are committed to excellence in science. All research undertaken or commissioned by OEH must meet globally accepted standards for scientific rigour. The OEH Scientific Rigour Position Statement describes our approach to scientific endeavour and demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our science is appropriately designed, well implemented and remains objective – and this includes work undertaken by research partners.

## Scope

The Research Partnership Strategy covers all new and existing research partnerships in OEH within the four categories of collaborative arrangements. It is intended to improve consistency and transparency across OEH and EPA in how the organisation engages with research partners.

## Benefits of this strategy

Major programs and existing resources help OEH and EPA to meet many of the priority knowledge needs identified in the Knowledge Strategy. Other priorities are aspirational or beyond our means to address using internal resources, so OEH and EPA need external research partners to help fill these gaps.

The Research Partnership Strategy provides clear direction about how OEH and EPA intends to work with research partners to deliver quality science and meet our priority knowledge needs under the Knowledge Strategy.

Collaborating with external research partners adds substantial value to the work that we do. There are significant opportunities to increase transparency and coordination, improve the impact of our science, and the value of our relationships with research institutions and universities.





Benefits include:

- targeted investment in collaborative research aligned with our priorities
- expanded impact and reputation of our science and the evidence we use to support our decisions
- maximised return on research spend by leveraging the resources of multiple parties
- expanded access to expert advice, state of the art technology and innovations
- contribution to developing students, joint appointments and co-location.

Having the NSW Government as a partner can improve research institutions' access to funding opportunities. Science generated in research partnerships helps to contribute to design of policies and programs, and supports teaching institutions in developing curricula and programs that will provide skillsets to fill the future needs of government.

The Research Partnerships Strategy also provides a framework for promoting and evaluating the mutual benefits gained.



## Our research network

OEH Science sits at the centre of a broader network that delivers environmental science for NSW. Its role is to provide science input and conduct research and, where required, facilitate, commission, source, influence or directly contract the provision of scientific research from external research organisations. Other parts of OEH and EPA also commission, source or contract research. As NSW Government organisations, OEH and EPA need to make sure these activities address agreed priorities and abide by overarching policies and procedures, are transparent and achieve best value for money.



## Kinds of collaborative arrangements

OEH has four kinds of collaborative arrangement.

### Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

OEH currently has peak level MOUs with the following research partners (as at November 2017):

- Macquarie University
- Sydney Institute of Marine Science (SIMS)
- University of New England
- University of New South Wales
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Sydney.

MOUs are developed where there are multiple projects across an institution. These guide cooperation and collaboration and include mutual objectives, forms of cooperation, and governance arrangements. Other categories of collaborative arrangements can be nested under these.

### Hubs and nodes

These are collaborations between OEH, leading universities and experts. They leverage collective and multi-disciplinary science capabilities delivering research outcomes needed for policy and operational priorities. A node sits under the hub advancing a research area. An example is the NSW Climate Adaptation Research Hub, under which there are four specific nodes: Biodiversity; Coastal Processes and Responses; Adaptive Communities; and Human Health and Social Impacts.

### Targeted research programs

These are collaborations where multiple universities and research institutions each contribute to an identified program research need. An example is the Thirlmere Lakes Research Program.

### Partnerships

These are long-term arrangements in which OEH is a contributing partner. They include Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), National Environmental Science Program (NESP) hubs and the Joint Remote Sensing Research Program (JRSRP). The JRSRP is a collaborative program that combines the research, expertise and infrastructure of the Remote Sensing Research Centre at the University of Queensland with that of remote-sensing groups in the Queensland, New South Wales and Victorian Governments.

## Our approach

Our research partnerships strategy has three program pillars: research, relationships and performance. We will work towards achieving long-term outcomes that align with these pillars over the next three years.

Pillars	Research		Relationships		Performance					
Outcomes	In partnership with others, OEH delivers quality science that is relevant and innovative, and used to inform decision-making.		OEH has strategic research partnerships that provide mutual benefits and build capacity.		Collaborative research is supported and managed in a cost-effective, transparent and consistent way across OEH.					
Objectives	INVEST in targeted, collaborative research that fills our knowledge needs.	EXPAND the impact and reputation of our science.	INCREASE the evidence we base our decisions on.	MAXIMISE return on research spend by leveraging resources from multiple parties.	DEVELOP and maintain high-level relationships with reputable partners.	SUPPORT staff with best-practice guides principles and resources.	EVALUATE the value gained from all tiers of the relationships.			
Principles	Integrity		Trust		Co-learning		Accountability		Service	

# Three-year roadmap

	Phase 1: Consolidate	Phase 2: Advance
Research	<p><b>Identify priorities</b> Identify knowledge gaps under the Knowledge Strategy themes and share with research partners.</p> <p><b>Stocktake</b> Review the range and extent of existing research partnerships across OEH and recommend improvements.</p>	<p><b>Identify priorities</b> Identify workforce and research capability gaps under the Knowledge Strategy and prioritise these with existing and new partnerships including links to teaching programs.</p> <p><b>Grow</b> Develop new partnerships based on mutual priorities. Agree on new focus areas with existing partners eg. capacity for data delivery, opportunities for artificial intelligence.</p>
Relationships	<p><b>Connect</b> Deliver an annual cycle of research partnership meetings and reporting for all research partnerships.</p> <p><b>Communicate</b> Publish joint information about our research partnerships and benefits.  Publish information about opportunities for collaboration identified under the Knowledge Strategy.</p>	<p><b>Connect</b> Develop joint initiatives to acknowledge and celebrate achievements.</p> <p><b>Communicate</b> Nominate and deliver communication, information exchange and/or promotion of learning activities with partners.</p>
Performance	<p><b>Support staff and partners</b> Promote and refine Procurement and grant guidelines, and develop new tools and resources for staff.  Establish an OEH group of practitioners to improve integration and consistency in managing hubs, nodes, and other large research partnerships.</p> <p><b>Evaluate</b> Develop and implement a program evaluation plan with agreed KPIs.  Evaluate the value gained from specific research partnerships.</p>	<p><b>Support staff and partners</b> Develop resources including standard templates for various agreements and funding arrangements.</p> <p><b>Evaluate</b> Conduct a three-year program evaluation.</p>



A photograph of four men in a field, likely a conservation site. They are gathered around a clump of tall, thin grasses. One man in the center is holding a small plant stem and examining it closely. The other three men are looking on, some with their hands on their hips. They are wearing various types of hats and work clothes. The background shows a vast, open landscape under a cloudy sky.

Photos:

Cover: J Spencer/OEH.

Page 2: Peter Robey, Purple Cactus.

Page 3: Vivers, Simone Pieta.

Page 7: Peter Robey, Purple Cactus.

Page 8: Peter Robey, Purple Cactus.

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Office of Environment and Heritage on behalf of  
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59 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW 2000

PO Box A290, Sydney South NSW 1232

Email: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)

Website: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

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