

Networking Australian Collections of Microorganisms within the Atlas of Living Australia

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Currently several initiatives are coming together to improve access to information on cultures in Australian collections of microorganisms. These include the formation of the Australian Microbial Resources Research Network in 2003 and the development of its Australian Microbial Resources Information Network website AMRiN [<http://www.amrin.org/>] in 2004, the formation of the Council of Heads of Australian Collections of Microorganisms (CHACM) [<http://www.amrin.org/CHACM/tabid/3775/Default.aspx>] in 2009, and the *Atlas of Living Australia* project [<http://www.ala.org.au/>]. In 2006, the Australian Government recognised the need to improve the national research capacity to access information in biological collections. CHACM is participating in a National Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) project during 2006-2012 known as the *Atlas of Living Australia* to database and electronically integrate the information in biological collections in Australia including animal, plant, microbial and DNA. The long term aim of this initiative is to provide an up-to-date inventory of the diversity and biogeographic distribution of Australian biota including microorganisms and microbial genetic resources, a key element of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). CHACM members representing 27 collections of microorganisms are participating to develop AMRiN into one of the hubs of the *Atlas of Living Australia* which will include on-line integrated data on cultures held by the Australian Collections of Microorganisms and their characteristics. It is hoped that this initiative to create a “virtual” Australian Collections of Microorganisms will lead to an improvement in support for the collections themselves. There is an urgent need for funding to raise the facilities, staffing and operating standards of the collections to meet OECD best practice. CHACM intends to use the current project to highlight this urgent need.