

**CLIMATE FRIENDLY:**

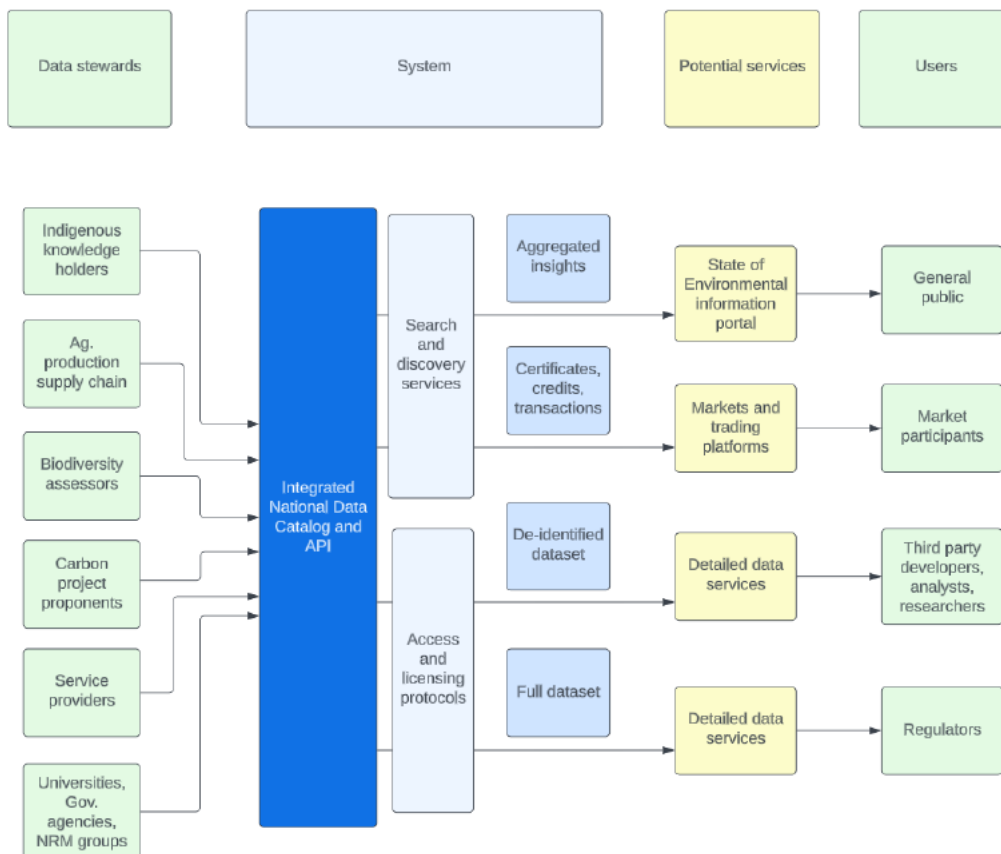
**1. In Climate Friendly’s submission, it is proposing the development of a single data sharing system for carbon, nature repair, water and agriculture data. How would it propose that system be structured?**

Climate Friendly and our carbon farming partners collect an enormous amount of environmental, carbon and land management data, as part of our rigorous feasibility assessments when planning and implementing a land-based carbon farming project which can span a 35-year period. There is a significant opportunity to share this data to support ongoing research, continuous improvements of national carbon, environmental and agricultural monitoring systems; and to provide information to land managers to aid decisions on managing their property.

In the case of carbon farming projects, this data is tightly linked to privacy laws and the livelihoods of individual land managers. Therefore, there are careful legal, ethical and technological considerations in enabling access to this information which would provide multiple benefits while also protecting confidentiality.

Advances in data infrastructure technology mean it is now possible to develop a national land data platform with a data discovery portal. This would give access to agreements and usage licenses with private organisations or individuals able to opt-into sharing their information to achieve multiple environmental, carbon and agricultural benefits. Our proposed structure is to consider an adaptation of the National Water Data Hub<sup>1</sup> design. Figure 1 below outlines a potential structure for such a data sharing system for environmental and land data.

**Figure 1: Environment and land information in a Federally coordinated decentralised system.**



<sup>1</sup> Figure 5, *Water Market Reform Roadmap* (2022), Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water, accessible here: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/water-market-reform-final-roadmap-report.pdf>

While previous attempts have been made to create national systems, these have typically relied on traditional data sharing systems and structures which aim to centralise data within a single central location and IT system. Traditional systems have limitations and are unlikely to facilitate data sharing of the exponentially increasing volumes of environmental and land related data sources that are being collected by a wide range of stakeholders, including business, conservation organisations, universities, peak bodies and governments, on carbon, nature repair, water and agriculture production. Modern data sharing systems can be decentralised with data housed on multiple connected IT systems. A decentralised system provides a more flexible way of sharing information across multiple information sources. A decentralised system covering the proposed range of environment and land related information sources would enable information and analysis that could not be achieved within separate disconnected systems or using traditional data sharing approaches.

As environmental and land data systems in both the private and public sectors are proliferating, it is important to establish a common framework, standards and integrated technology platform for exchanging information. A decentralised environmental and land data sharing system will require strong Federal governance and interoperable standards to ensure data integrity and appropriate use. It will also be important to develop central Federal oversight of search and discovery capability, as opposed to the government building a large centralised traditional data repository. An information supply chain 'Custodian' for environmental data was recommended in the Independent Review of the EPBC Act as well as the Independent ACCU Review. This Custodian role could set these Federal standards for a common framework and standards for exchanging information and build search and discovery capability. The Custodian could also deliver access and licensing protocols for a variety of common users and use cases. Given similar functions currently performed by the ABS/ABARES, the ABS would be a good candidate to take on this function.

This [short video](#) helps explain how the database could work and how governments, conservation organisations and agricultural producers might all contribute information and obtain benefits.

**2. Who would need to play the lead role in delivering Climate Friendly’s proposed single data sharing system: would it be a particular Department or agency, and how much does Climate Friendly assess that it would cost to administer and operate that system?**

Information governance is important to coordinate a complex decentralised data sharing system as proposed. Data flowing through this system will have many interested stakeholders, including researchers, the private sector and governments among other organisations and individuals. The proposed “Environment Information Australia” entity may appropriately take on this role and fit within the Australian Bureau of Statistics functions, with support from Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. Administration of this function requires an agency that has powers to coordinate across line agencies and functions, including coordinating across the following portfolios:

- Climate Change & Energy
- Environment & Water
- Indigenous Australians
- Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry
- Various other economic and regional development portfolios.

Climate Friendly is not in a position to assess the costs of developing or administering the proposed data sharing approach at a national scale. We do however note that the recent Federal Budget included over \$150 million for delivery of programs that include relevant data system improvements:

- Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) - \$38.3 million over 4 years from 2023-24 and \$7.6 million per year ongoing from 2027-28 to strengthen the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s capability, particularly through the ABARES.
- Bureau Of Meteorology - \$32.7 million to support strong, efficient and transparent water market
- National Greenhouse Accounts - \$21.8 million has been committed to enhancing the emissions-tracking capability of the National Greenhouse Accounts
- Environment Information Australia - \$51.5 million towards up-to-date and reliable environmental data to support the Nature Positive Plan.

We believe that if coordinated the more than \$150 million included in these budget allocations, along with other related budget allocations across various agencies, present the opportunity to develop the proposed environment and land data system that Climate Friendly has outlined above.

**3. Climate Friendly says in its submission that “legislative change and implementation in relation to the EPBC Act are likely to take considerable time”. Is Climate Friendly able to specifically outline why and how it has formed this view, and for how long it considers that this will be an issue?**

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is a broad piece of legislation that covers a range of environment and heritage matters. Professor Graeme Samuels’ Independent Review of the EPBC Act recommended broad reform of the legislation and how it is applied. The Government has broadly accepted the recommendations and we understand are preparing legislation for consultation in 2023. There is complexity in finalising such fundamental reform of Australia’s environment and heritage laws through Parliament. In addition, time will be required to develop, consult and implement further subordinate legislation, such as an EPBC Act Offset Standard. Based on this need for legislative changes, consultation timeframes and operational reforms to finalising implementation, we formed the view that this can be expected to take considerable time. We do not have a specific view on time, but we believe this will likely run into 2024.