

# ALA or State portal? A guide to selecting the right portal for the job

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## **Abstract**

Over a relatively short period, the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) has matured to provide the most comprehensive repository available of Australian biodiversity data, and arguably the world's most capable online portal for querying, visualising and downloading biodiversity data. However, the ALA creates no data – it sources its information from a wide variety of data-rich organisations, some of which already have mature portals, resulting in multiple portals publishing the same data, notable differences in detail, and occasional confusion as to the most appropriate portal to use.

From its initial inception the ALA's goal has been to complement existing biodiversity systems. Nevertheless, some organisations may question the business sense of maintaining their local portals in a challenging funding environment while the ALA is offering such exceptional capability. However, there are good reasons for organisations to maintain their existing investment. While ALA and State portals may superficially appear to duplicate functions, the drivers for State-based portals, particularly those with a regulatory or planning function, are different to the citizen science and collections focus of the ALA, resulting in different approaches to data and users. An ecosystem of complementary portals provides better conservation outcomes than one-size-fits-all.

This talk will discuss some of the comparative strengths of each portal and present guidelines to assist users in determining the most useful portal in situations such as environmental impact assessment, conservation planning and scientific research.

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