

WORLDWIDE NETWORK ON THE ENVIRONMENT

THE INTERNATIONAL REFERRAL System (known as INFOTERRA) is a worldwide network through which organisations and individuals requiring environmental information can obtain the names and addresses of appropriate sources.

INFOTERRA was created by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) following a recommendation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in June 1972. The purpose of INFOTERRA is to facilitate the exchange of environmental information within and between nations.

INFOTERRA is operated through a network of governments, comprising the Programme Activity Centre at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya; the INFOTERRA Computer Unit attached to the United Nations International Computer Centre in Geneva, Switzerland; and an international link of National, Regional and Sectoral Focal Points.

The system was designed by experts from various countries under the auspices of UNEP and after review by participating nations and organisations, became operational in 1975. INFOTERRA now has focal points in 112 countries and the International Directory contains more than 8500 sources, covering a wide range of environmental information. The Australian National Focal Point is the Department of Home Affairs and Environment.

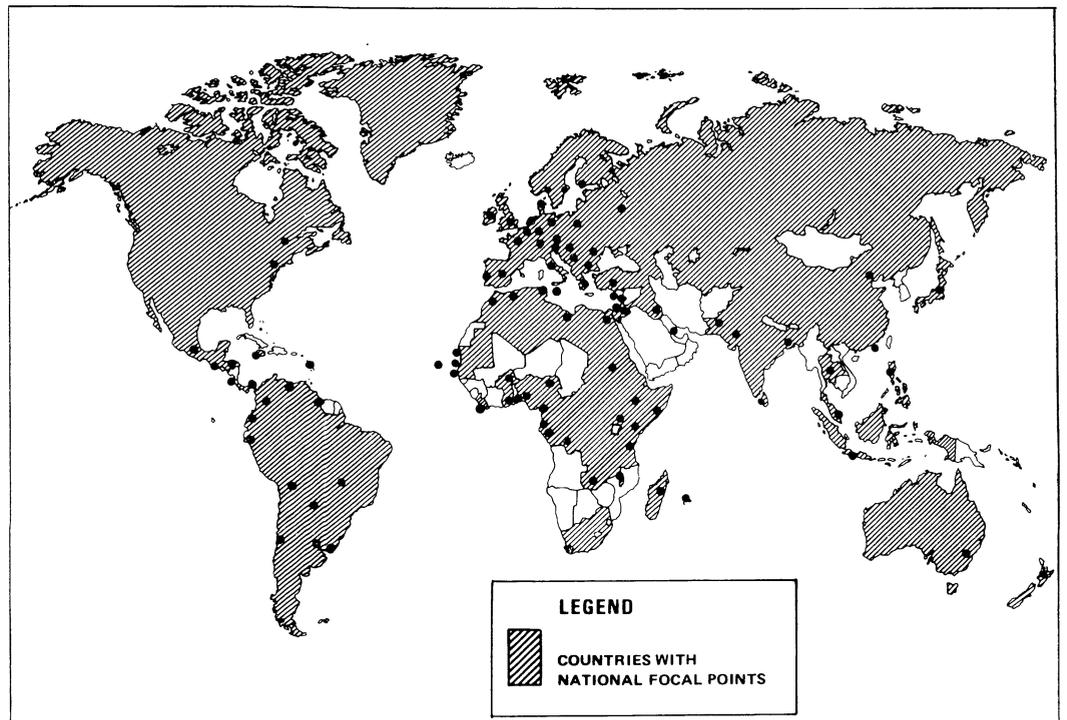
The data collected in Australia by the National Focal Point identifies organisations and individual experts as sources of environmental information. Data on each information source is stored on computer files to allow rapid searching and retrieval. A copy of all Australian sources is sent to INFOTERRA Headquarters and appears in the International Directory of Sources issued to the National Focal Points.

At present, there are over 500 Australian sources, mostly government departments, tertiary education institutions and research organisations (particularly CSIRO).

The number of Australian sources, and indeed of the system as a whole, is growing. Organisations and individuals with environmental information are encouraged to register as a source. The basic requirements are willingness and ability to provide information on request through the system. Registration input forms and instructions for their completion are obtainable from the National Focal Point.

INFOTERRA sources are also primary users of data and may request assistance from the network in locating sources of information in their own field or in related areas.

The subject coverage of INFOTERRA is very broad and covers all problems which can be considered 'environmental'. The information covers the following categories:



Through INFOTERRA's extensive network, environmental information can be exchanged between nations throughout the world.

Atmosphere and climate
Chemical and biological agents and processes
Disasters
Education, training and information
Energy: resources, supply and use
Fresh water
Geographic references
Human health and well-being
Human settlements and habitats
Land use and misuse
Management and planning
Monitoring and assessment
Non-renewable resources
Oceans, seas and estuaries
Physical energy phenomena
Pollution
Population
Recreation
Renewable resources
Socio-economic aspects
Subject disciplines
Technology and industry
Transportation
Wastes
Wildlife

of sources with information on ... ' The topic should be stated as specifically as possible.

When a request is received, a search is made to find appropriate addresses in the Australian Directory and, if this does not yield the right material, a search will be made of the International Directory. The International Directory is also used when the users specifies the country(ies) from which referral addresses are required.

The National Focal Point does not charge for the provision of these names and addresses. It is the responsibility of the user to approach the source(s) and request the information. If this information is subject to a fee, this is a matter for negotiation solely between source and user.

Anyone who wishes to use INFOTERRA should contact the National Focal Point at the following address:

National Focal Point Manager, INFOTERRA, Department of Home Affairs and Environment, PO Box 1252, Canberra City ACT 2601. Attention: Assistant Secretary Environment Studies Branch. Telephone: (062) 467 211.

Requests for referral searches should be phrased on the following lines: 'Please provide me with a list of appropriate addresses

Don Macrae
INFOTERRA, Canberra