

Essential Facts: The Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) Ethics Committee

Who are we?

The AH&MRC is the representative body of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in NSW and its Ethics Committee operates under National Health and Medical Research Council legislation.

The Ethics Committee is comprised of Aboriginal community-based people and health professionals, together with other members who have expertise and experience in Aboriginal health and research. Ten of the twelve members of the Committee are Aboriginal.

When do applications need to be submitted to us?

The Committee considers applications relating to research that may affect the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and communities in NSW where any one of the following applies:

- The experience of Aboriginal people is an explicit focus of all or part of the research; or
- Data collection is explicitly directed at Aboriginal peoples; or
- Aboriginal peoples, as a group, are to be examined in the results; or
- The information has an impact on one or more Aboriginal communities; or
- Aboriginal health funds are a source of funding.

Research that is not specifically directed at Aboriginal people or communities, such as for the total population or a sub-population (eg. rural NSW, people over 50 years old) can still potentially impact on Aboriginal people. However, an application for such research need only be made to the Committee if any one of the following applies:

- Any of the five factors listed above are present; or
- Aboriginal people are known, or are likely, to be significantly over-represented in the group being studied (eg. compared to the 2.3% of the total NSW population as shown in the 2011 Census); or
- The Aboriginal experience of the medical condition being studied is known, or is likely, to be different from the overall population; or

- There are Aboriginal people who use the services being studied in distinctive ways, or who have distinctive barriers that limit their access to the services; or
- It is proposed to separately identify data relating to Aboriginal people in the results.

AH&MRC Key Principles for research in Aboriginal health

Ethics applications need to demonstrate the following:

- **Net Benefits for Aboriginal people and communities:** that the research will advance scientific knowledge and result in a demonstrated net benefit for the health of Aboriginal people and communities.
- **Aboriginal Community Control of Research:** that there is Aboriginal community control over all aspects of the proposed research including research design, ownership of data, data interpretation and publication of research findings.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** that the research will be conducted in a manner sensitive to the cultural principles of Aboriginal society.
- **Reimbursement of costs:** that Aboriginal communities and organisations will be reimbursed for all costs arising from their participation in the research process.
- **Enhancing Aboriginal skills and knowledge:** that the project will utilise available opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of Aboriginal people, communities and organisations that are participating in the project.

Further information and guidelines are available on the AH&MRC website, in the section Ethics Committee at: www.ahmrc.org.au/ethics.php

If you are unsure whether a research proposal requires AH&MRC Ethical review please contact the AH&MRC Ethics Committee Secretariat for advice (phone: (02) 9212 4777 or email: ethics@ahmrc.org.au).