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Human Research Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Acknowledgement of Country

The Parenting Research Centre acknowledges and respects the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country and the Elders of the past and present.

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Terms of Reference

The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) has established the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with the following terms of reference.

1. Role of the HREC

- 1.1 The HREC is responsible for considering the ethical implications of proposed research, evaluation, continuous practice improvement and other relevant projects undertaken by PRC staff that involve humans. It ensures the ethical standards of these activities are maintained. The primary role of the HREC is to protect the welfare and rights of participants. It must be satisfied that the project protocol gives adequate consideration to participants' welfare, rights, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage, both individual and collective. The HREC is also responsible for establishing, implementing and reviewing procedures for evaluating, certifying and monitoring the acceptable ethical conduct of these activities.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The HREC will operate in accordance with the following terms of reference:
 - 2.1.1 As identified through project risk assessment processes, to consider the ethical implications of all human research proposals submitted to the HREC for review.
 - 2.1.2 As identified through project risk assessment processes, to consider the ethical implications of evaluation and continuous practice improvement projects, and other identified activities submitted to the HREC for review.
 - 2.1.3 To ensure ethical standards are maintained in all approved projects in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.
 - 2.1.4 To protect the confidentiality and privacy of individuals by ensuring the secure collection, storage and disposal of confidential data during the conduct of research and other approved activities.
 - 2.1.5 To promote understanding within the PRC of the ethical issues raised in the conduct of the organisation's work.
 - 2.1.6 To report and provide advice to the PRC on ethical matters related to the designated activities identified in 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, and to work with the PRC to support the adoption of, and compliance with, appropriate codes of practice for this work.
 - 2.1.7 To establish, implement and review procedures for evaluating, certifying and monitoring the acceptable ethical conduct of research and other relevant activities conducted by PRC staff.
 - 2.1.8 To maintain a record of all project protocols, standard and expedited applications, and amendments received and reviewed.
 - 2.1.9 To ensure human research approved by the HREC is appropriately monitored, including through annual and end-of-project reports.
 - 2.1.10 To adopt measures to identify and manage any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest involving HREC members or PRC staff.
 - 2.1.11 To handle any complaints about human research or the conduct of human research within the PRC.

3. Scope of Responsibility

- 3.1 The HREC will review all proposals submitted by PRC staff, or by students associated with PRC projects, to ensure they comply with the National Statement.
 - 3.1.1 Applications requiring full ethical review will be considered by the HREC at a duly convened meeting. Applications eligible for expedited review may be considered

outside a scheduled meeting by the Chair and/or delegated reviewers, in accordance with HREC procedures.

3.1.2 Committee members who are unable to attend a meeting may submit a written review, report or comments on an application prior to the meeting. Any such advice will be tabled and considered by the HREC as part of its review and decision-making process.

3.2 The PRC will provide sufficient resources to enable the HREC to meet the requirements of sound ethical review, communicate effectively with researchers, and access the expertise needed to address the ethical issues arising from the categories of research and other activities it considers.

4. Status of the HREC

4.1 The HREC is an advisory body to the Chief Executive Officer, with responsibility for advising on the approval, modification or rejection of a proposal on ethical grounds. All decisions will be recorded in writing and include the grounds for the decision.

5. Accountability of the HREC

5.1 The HREC is accountable to the PRC Chief Executive Officer in the conduct of its business. The minutes of all meetings, signed by the HREC Chairperson, will be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer following confirmation as required.

5.1.1 Without limiting clause 5.1, the day-to-day management of the business of the HREC is the responsibility of the HREC Administrator and any person delegated by the relevant Portfolio Lead. The relevant Portfolio Lead and the HREC Chairperson will oversee the administration and operation of the Committee in accordance with these Terms of Reference and any applicable policies and procedures.

5.2 In accordance with the National Statement, the Chief Executive Officer has delegated to the HREC the authority to:

5.2.1 give approval on behalf of the PRC for the conduct of ethically approved human research, and other designated activities identified in clauses 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, at the PRC;

5.2.2 defer or reject proposals;

5.2.3 request modifications to proposals;

5.2.4 monitor approved human research;

5.2.5 approve amendments to proposals;

5.2.6 suspend approval of the activity for which approval is sought; and

5.2.7 withdraw approval of applications.

5.3 The HREC may, from time to time, bring issues of significant concern to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer.

5.4 The HREC will provide an annual report to the Chief Executive Officer at the end of each financial year. The report will include information on membership and the number of human research proposals reviewed.

5.5 The HREC will report annually to the National Health and Medical Research Council as required in the National Statement.

5.6 Membership of the HREC and its Terms of Reference will be posted on the PRC website. Membership of the HREC will also be published in the annual report.

6. Membership and Meetings of the HREC

Composition of the HREC

- 6.1 The membership of the HREC will consist of at least eight members appointed to the following categories, as required by the National Statement:
 - 6.1.1 Chairperson, with suitable experience, and whose other responsibilities will not impair the HREC's capacity to carry out its obligations under the *National Statement*;
 - 6.1.2 At least two lay people, one man and one woman, who have no affiliation with the PRC and are not currently engaged in medical, scientific, legal or academic work;
 - 6.1.3 At least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people;
 - 6.1.4 At least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community;
 - 6.1.5 At least one lawyer who is not engaged to provide advice to the PRC; and
 - 6.1.6 At least two people with current research experience in the areas of research that are relevant to research proposals considered by the PRC. These two members may be selected, according to need, from an established pool of inducted members with relevant expertise.

Appointment

- 6.2 The Chief Executive Officer will appoint members to the HREC in consultation with the Executive Team and other PRC staff as appropriate, using an open and transparent process. Members will be appointed as individuals for their knowledge and experience, and not as representatives of any organisation, group or opinion.
- 6.3 In accordance with the provisions of the National Statement, as far as possible there will be an equal number of male and female members and at least a third of members who are external to the PRC.
- 6.4 Membership will lapse if a member fails without reasonable excuse, or without notifying the Chairperson, to attend three consecutive meetings of the HREC, unless exceptional circumstances exist.
- 6.5 A member may resign from the HREC at any time by giving written notice to the Chairperson. Steps will then be taken to fill the vacancy created by the resignation.
- 6.6 Members will be provided with adequate orientation on appointment and continuing education throughout their tenure, in accordance with the National Statement.
- 6.7 Membership of the HREC will be reviewed every three years. Membership of the HREC will not normally be extended beyond six years, unless it is necessary to ensure that there is at least one person in each of the categories set out in clause 6.1.

Liability Coverage

- 6.8 The PRC provides indemnity for HREC members for any liabilities that arise as a result of the member exercising their duties as a member, in good faith.

Remuneration

- 6.9 Members will be reimbursed for any legitimate expenses incurred in their attendance at meetings of the HREC. As the role of Chairperson will be complex and involve extra commitment, the Chairperson may be reimbursed at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

Meetings of the HREC and Conduct of Business

- 6.10 Meetings of the HREC will be convened as required, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the HREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
- 6.11 The HREC will perform its functions in accordance with the HREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), which will be reviewed at least every three years and amended and updated as necessary.

- 6.12 All HREC members will have access to, and/or be provided with copies of, the HREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and will be consulted about any changes.
- 6.13 All applications to the HREC for ethical review of human research proposals will be submitted using the Human Research Ethics Application *Form (HREA)*. Guidelines will be issued to assist applicants in preparing applications.
- 6.14 The HREC will be supported by PRC staff, who will be responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of HREC business and activities in accordance with the HREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). PRC resourcing of the HREC will be adequate to support effective communication between the HREC and researchers, and to ensure the HREC's workload does not compromise the quality or timeliness of ethical review.

Complaints and Review

- 6.15 Any concern or complaint about the conduct of an approved project, or the HREC's review process, will be handled in accordance with the process outlined in the HREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

7. Amendment to the Terms of Reference

- 7.1 The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every three years. Amendments to the Terms of Reference may be made by the HREC following consideration of a proposed amendment at a scheduled meeting of the HREC, with two thirds of members agreeing to the amendment. Amendments may also be proposed by the Chief Executive Officer for presentation at a meeting of the HREC, with two thirds of members agreeing to the amendment.