THE DEPARTMENTS OF DEFENCE AND VETERANS’ AFFAIRS
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

1. The Departments of Defence and Veterans’ Affairs have jointly established the Departments of Defence and Veterans’ Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (DDVA HREC) as the institutional human research ethics committee (HREC) in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (the National Statement). The DDVA HREC is registered with the National Health and Medical Research Council (EC00460).

PURPOSE

2. The purpose of the DDVA HREC is to provide expert review of research proposals submitted for ethical approval. In doing this, the committee aims to:

   a. provide independent, competent and timely review of human research proposals in respect of their ethical acceptability
   b. protect the mental and physical welfare, rights, dignity and safety of research participants
   c. facilitate ethical research through efficient and effective review processes
   d. promote an awareness and understanding of human research ethics within the Department of Defence (Defence), the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) and the broader community
   e. review human research in accordance with the National Statement, other national guidelines and legislative instruments
   f. provide oversight, monitoring and advice on ethical aspects of human research.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

3. Research proposals involving humans will be reviewed by the DDVA HREC where one or more of the following apply:

   a. participants are or include Defence members, other Defence personnel or ex-serving personnel, their information or tissue

---

b. participants are recruited, either directly or indirectly, through a service provided by Defence or DVA

c. the research is to be conducted by Defence or DVA personnel

d. the research is to be conducted on/in a Defence establishment

e. the research is to be sponsored, endorsed or funded in any part by Defence or DVA.

4. The DDVA HREC will also review requests under the Special Access Scheme for the use of unapproved therapeutic goods in accordance with section 19(1)(a) of the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989\(^2\).

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROCESSES OF RESEARCH REVIEW

Low and negligible risk research

5. In accordance with the National Statement, Defence has established non-HREC levels of ethical review for low- and negligible-risk human research as follows:

a. Joint Health Command Low Risk Ethics Panel (JHC-LREP) – for the review of low and negligible risk health and medical research

b. People Research Low Risk Ethics Panel – for the review of low and negligible risk people research

c. Defence Science and Technology Low Risk Ethics Panel – for the review of low and negligible risk research undertaken by researchers employed by the Defence Science and Technology Group.

6. Where one of the panels listed at paragraph 5 determines that a research proposal requires HREC review, the research proposal is to be referred to the DDVA HREC. The panels may also seek advice on specific matters from the DDVA HREC, via the Secretariat, as required.

7. The ethics panels listed at paragraph 5 will provide six monthly reports to the DDVA HREC on approved research. The JHC-LREP will also provide an annual report that summarises the panels’ key activities in the previous calendar year to the DDVA HREC in the first quarter of the following year.

8. Low and negligible risk research proposals that do not fit within the remit of the panels listed at paragraph 5 are eligible for expedited review by the DDVA HREC Chair/Deputy Chair and other delegates as required.

Multi-centre research

9. To facilitate multi-centre research the DDVA HREC may:

a. communicate with any other HREC

b. provide its scientific/technical and/or ethical assessment of the research to another HREC.

---

RELATIONSHIP TO NON-AFFILIATED RESEARCHERS

10. The DDVA HREC will conduct and monitor the ethical and scientific merit of research proposals for researchers external to Defence and DVA where the research involves one or more of the following:
   a. Defence personnel
   b. ex-serving Defence members
   c. is funded by Defence and/or DVA.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

11. The DDVA HREC is the institutional human research ethics committee for Defence and DVA.
12. Within Defence, the committee is accountable to the Surgeon General Australian Defence Force (SGADF) in the conduct of its regular business.
13. Within DVA, the committee is accountable to the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.

MECHANISMS OF REPORTING

14. The DDVA HREC will provide:
   a. an annual report to the National Health and Medical Research Council in accordance with the National Statement paragraph 5.7.4
   b. an annual report (based on a calendar year) to the Vice Chief of the Defence Force and the Deputy President Strategy, DVA
   c. a summary of the DDVA HREC’s activities (based on a financial year) as part of the Joint Health Command Annual Review
   d. regular updates on approved research proposals to the Defence Human Research Governance Board
   e. six-monthly reports on approved protocols, researcher compliance with progress reporting and any other relevant information will be provided to the Surgeon General Australia Defence Force (SGADF) and the First Assistant Secretary External Stakeholder and Government Relations, DVA.

15. Agendas and Minutes of meetings shall be provided to Defence and DVA institutional representatives:
   a. Director General Health Business and Plans (Defence)
   b. Director Health Programme and Plans (Defence)
   c. Assistant Secretary Data, Informatics and Research Branch (DVA)
   d. Director Research Section (DVA).

16. Additionally, SGADF and/or the First Assistant Secretary External Stakeholder and Government Relations, DVA will be provided the Agendas and Minutes upon request.
MEMBERSHIP

Committee Composition

17. The composition of the committee shall be in accordance with National Statement paragraph 5.1.30 and shall include at least:

a. a Chairperson

b. at least two lay people, one man and one woman, who have no affiliation with Defence or DVA, and are not currently involved in medical, scientific, legal or academic work

c. at least one person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people

d. at least one person who performs a pastoral care role in a community (eg an Aboriginal elder or minister of religion)

e. at least one lawyer, where possible one who is not engaged to advise Defence or DVA

f. at least two people with current research experience that is relevant to research proposals to be considered at meetings they attend.

18. Additionally, a Deputy Chair, at least one Defence health graduate (a current or ex-serving Defence member who has professional qualifications in medicine, nursing, dentistry, psychology or other health profession) and at least one contemporary veteran (an individual who has served in one or more of the conflicts involving Australian troops since 1999) are to be appointed to the committee.

19. In accordance with the National Statement paragraph 5.1.29 there shall be equal numbers of men and women (where possible) and at least one third of the members are to be external to Defence and DVA. The Australian Government has an additional requirement that a gender balance of 60/40 (male/female) or better be maintained for all Government boards.

Remuneration of members

20. External members are offered a sitting fee for each meeting that they attend. The value of sitting fees will be determined by the SGADF and the First Assistant Secretary External Stakeholder and Government Relations, DVA and will be reviewed periodically.

21. All members will be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in attending Committee meetings or in otherwise carrying out the business of the Committee.