



Australian Government

Department of Defence

Department of Veterans' Affairs

BN71517592

**MINUTES OF THE 60th MEETING OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF DEFENCE
AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
(DDVA HREC) EC00460**

**HELD AT s47E(d) CANBERRA ACT 2600
ON 05 FEBRUARY 2024**

Attendees:

Dr Tony Cotton, AM

Chair

Secretariat:

s47E(c)

Assistant Director Research Ethics
Staff Officer 1 Human Research Ethics

Observers:

s47E(c)

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Acting Assistant Director Research Services
(Department of Veterans' Affairs)

*Attendance via teleconference

ITEM 1 – OPENING

1.01– Opening & Acknowledgment of Country

1. The meeting opened at 1409 hours. The Chair welcomed members and s47E(c)
2. The Chair acknowledged and paid respects to the Indigenous custodians of Country throughout Australia, their culture and Elders past, present and future.
3. s47E(c) introduced s47E(c) to members.

1.02 – Meeting Recorded

4. The meeting is recorded for the purpose of transcribing of the minutes, and the audio recording will be deleted once the minutes are finalised.

1.03 – Conflicts of Interest

5. Members are to advise any conflicts of interests in accordance with the 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research' (National Statement) paragraphs 5.2.4 and 5.4.5 and the 'DDVA HREC Researcher and Administrative Guidelines'.
6. No members declared conflicts of interest.
7. The Chair requested that s47E(d) excuse s47E(d) from the discussion of agenda items s47E(d) in order to remove any perception of coercion in the review process.

ITEM 2 – CONFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES

8. The Minutes of the previous meeting, that was held on 20 November 2023 were accepted by members upon motion by s47F and seconded by s47F


ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

9. The Committee noted the updates on the matters arising from previous meetings.
10. The Secretariat are to ensure that all outstanding teleconferences have been held.

Action: Secretariat are to ensure that all outstanding teleconferences have been held.

ITEM 4 – NEW APPLICATIONS (5)

s47C & s47E(d)



ITEM 6 – COMPLAINTS (3)

s47E(d)

26. The Committee noted that s47E(complaints have been received. Refer to s47E(d) for further information.

ITEM 7 – PROGRESS AND FINAL REPORTS

27. The Committee noted the following:

- a. Twenty-seven Final Reports were received. Eighteen were approved and one researcher was advised that a progress report and request for extension of ethics approval was required. Eight Final Reports are currently under review.
- b. Fifty-seven Progress Report were received. Forty-five have been approved and 12 are under review.
- c. Twenty-four progress reports are due by the end of March 2024.

ITEM 8 – MATTERS FOR NOTING

28. The Committee noted the following:

- a. Six new applications were reviewed out-of-session, five new applications were received and responses to the administrative review are pending. A request for further information has been sent for s47E(d) since the meeting papers were circulated.
- b. Twenty-three resubmissions were reviewed out-of-session and nine resubmissions are pending (including s47E(d)).
- d. Ethics approval was withdrawn for one project, as per the outcomes of the previous meeting Minutes.
- e. Twenty-one amendments were reviewed. The amendments to s47E(d) have been approved since the meeting papers were circulated.
- f. Thirty-six extensions to the period of ethics approval were received. An extension for s47E(d) has been approved since the papers were circulated.
- g. Eight desktop audits were conducted.
- h. Ethical approval has expired for six projects.
- i. There were no adverse events or serious adverse events reported.

ITEM 9 – OTHER BUSINESS

s47E(d)



30. The Committee noted the following:


a. s47E(d)



b. The remit of the DDVA HREC approval is limited to research and does not extend to the provision of health services under the Veterans' MATES Program.

c. An internal review of the project file was conducted by the Secretariat following the publication of an article in The Saturday Paper in late July 2023 and following receipt of a number of emails from individuals raising concerns about the use of their data in the Veterans' MATES program. This resulted in correspondence being sent to the Principal Investigator and DVA seeking clarification on a number of matters. This has resulted in responses being provided by the research team and DVA. The latest correspondence – the data management plan, aims to address concerns that have previously been raised by the Committee.


d. s47E(d)



31. The Committee agreed that the response has not adequately addressed the concerns that were raised.

32. The Committee discussed the parameters of **consent** for the use of DVA administrative data for research purposes as follows:

a. s47E(d)



- b. s47E(d)
- c.
- d. Information obtained under Freedom of Information requests and provided by complainants increases the ambiguity around the parameters of consent.
- e. s47E(d)

33. The Committee has received emails from approximately 80 individuals raising concerns about the use of data for the Veterans' MATES Program. Additionally, five complaints in total have been received (three of them are tabled for consideration as part of this meeting).

34. Noting the points raised above and matters covered in previous meetings, the Committee agreed that ethics approval is to be withdrawn for the project. No further analysis and/or publication of data is to occur.

35. Given the degree of contention about the provision and retention of data to third parties, the DDVA HREC requires that all research data be returned to DVA for archival for the requisite period.

36. A Final Report is to be submitted to the DDVA HREC for this project and include detailed information on the ongoing data management for the project including details on how data transfer back to DVA will occur and confirmation that all research data has been destroyed.

37. Defence and DVA are to be advised of the decision to withdraw ethics approval. The Chair will email the relevant parties to advise them by no later than COB Tuesday 6 February 2024. Correspondence is to then be sent to the researchers and complainants will be advised of the decision to withdraw ethics approval the following business day.

Action: Correspondence regarding the decision to withdraw ethics approval to be drafted and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 10 – NEXT MEETING

38. The next DDVA HREC meeting is scheduled for 4 March 2024 at 1400 hours, at s47E(d) in Canberra. The following members are rostered to attend:

[illegible]

39. The meeting closed at 1655 hours.

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Dr Tony Cotton, AM
Chair
7 February 2024

s47E(c)
Meeting Secretary
7 February 2024

Distribution list:

DDVA HREC

For information:

Deputy Surgeon General Australian Defence Force (Defence)

Assistant Secretary responsible for research (DVA)

Director, Strategic Clinical Assurance and Ethics (Defence)

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