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# **NHMRC PROGRAM GRANTS FUNDING POLICY**

## for funding commencing in 2012

Applications open on 10 March 2010 and close midnight. AEST Tuesday 1 June 2010

*Late applications will not be accepted.*

Interviews: Anticipated in the week commencing Monday 18 October 2010.  
Outcome Advised: At the Minister's discretion, anticipated to be in December 2010.

This document should be read in conjunction with the  
*NHMRC Program Grants Advice and Instructions to Applicants*  
for funding commencing in 2012, available through RGMS.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's leading expert body promoting the development and maintenance of public and individual health standards. It is established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, which is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/index.htm>

The *NHMRC Strategic Plan 2010 – 2012* (Strategic Plan) describes the agency's strategic objectives and provides the context within which its funding schemes operate. The Strategic Plan, which was tabled in both houses of the Federal Parliament, has five strategic objectives:

**Objective 1** - To raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia;

**Objective 2** - To foster the development of consistent health standards between the States and Territories;

**Objective 3** - To foster medical research and training and public health research and training throughout Australia;

**Objective 4** - To foster consideration of ethical issues relating to health; and

**Objective 5** - To build a better NHMRC.

NHMRC will only support excellence in research, because the best outcomes flow from the best research. NHMRC is committed to all research relevant to health (including biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research) and recognises that multidisciplinary approaches are needed to solve the complex problems of health.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The aim of the NHMRC's Program Grants scheme is to provide support for teams of the highest quality researchers to pursue broadly based, collaborative research addressing complex problems.

The underlying rationale for the scheme is to provide substantial, long-term, flexible funding to integrated groups of researchers with well-established track records of high impact health and medical research

Program Grant recipients are expected to:

- contribute new knowledge at a leading international level in important areas of health and medical research;
- develop novel ideas and approaches;
- tackle problems for which longer term stable funding is essential;
- develop training and career development opportunities within the team;
- facilitate collaborative use of specialised facilities or expertise; and
- pursue interdisciplinary, collaborative goals which would not be possible by working on the program's individual components in isolation of each other.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM GRANTS

### 3.1 Duration

Program Grants will be of five years duration.

### 3.2 Budget

The budgets offered will be determined by the NHMRC and will be dependent on the assessment of the CIs' track records. Program Grant budgets will generally equate to the sum of the quantum for all CIs on the application. Budgets will be generous and will allow flexibility to redirect funds to new initiatives, provided that expenditure is consistent with the Program proposal, and that funds are not used for purposes excluded in the Deed of Agreement covering the funding. See:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/manage/policy/deeds.htm#a1>

Budget construction will be based on the **team** rather than the **research**. It will also take into account each CI's time available for research. Successful full time CIs may receive a full quantum. Part time CIs may be allocated half a quantum.

The quanta are intended to allow the team to support a range of senior and junior postdoctoral researchers, research and technical assistants and higher degree candidates, as well as providing for direct research costs and minor items of equipment for use in facilities in Australia.

The budget for the Program will not provide support for CI salaries unless special circumstances exist. It would need to be clearly demonstrated that a CI had no alternative source of salary support, and that salary costs were not being inappropriately shifted from another budget. In such instances, a clear outline of the circumstances and salary being sought must be submitted to the PGRP who may recommend an appropriate increase in the Program's budget.

Individuals whose salary is supported through the NHMRC's People Support schemes (e.g. Australia Fellow, Research Fellow, Practitioner Fellow and Career Development Awards) may be included as CIs.

### 3.3 Indexation

Program Grant budgets may be indexed each year by the annual NHMRC out-turn factor. No additional funds will be provided, although the budget may be altered depending on the outcome of any Administrative Review.

### 3.4 Team Members

It is expected that CIs:

- hold a PhD or relevant professional qualification (for example, MBBS, MPH)
- be at either salary Level C or above, be an NHMRC Senior Research Fellow or above, or be at an equivalent level or above
- have a strong record of achievement in competitive peer-reviewed research or industry-supported research
- will, in the context of their other commitments, commit sufficient time to ensure the success of the program.

Applicants are advised to critically review the composition of their team prior to submission of a Program Grant application. Several instances have occurred where

an otherwise competitive application was disadvantaged by the inclusion of clearly non-competitive CIs.

### **3.5 Full Time Chief Investigators Commitment**

Each full time CI is required to devote 80-100% of their NHMRC research time<sup>1</sup> to the Program. Therefore the available time for additional research activity funded by the NHMRC is restricted to a maximum of 20% unless otherwise stated in specific schemes

### **3.6 Part-Time Chief Investigators Commitment**

NHMRC expects that CIs on Programs will be full time. However, there may be exceptional cases such as:

- personal circumstances; or
- when a researcher has particular and essential skills that she/he brings to the research efforts of two teams.

In this case the applicant may potentially be a part-time CI. A part-time CI on a Program Grant cannot devote less than 50% of their NHMRC research time to any Program.

### **3.7 Additional Personnel**

Teams may include 'Additional Personnel' who will contribute to the Program without being listed as CIs. A description of how they will participate in the Program can be included under the Research Strategy and/or Collaborative Gain sections of the application.

Program Grant Additional Personnel:

- are not restricted from applying for any other NHMRC grants as a result of their status as Program Grant Additional Personnel;
- will not contribute to the Program's budget; and
- can be researchers who are primarily based overseas.

## **4. ELIGIBILITY**

### **4.1 Eligibility Criteria**

The eligibility criteria include:

- The Applicant team must include three or more Chief Investigators (CIs);
- CIs must have one of the following:
  - i. Australian or New Zealand citizenship
  - ii. Australian permanent resident status at the time of application
- Researchers who will be primarily based overseas for the duration of the grant cannot be named as a CI;
- Program Grant holders can apply for a new Program Grant in years 4 and 5 of their existing Program Grant only; and

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<sup>1</sup> NHMRC research time is the total time spent by a CI on all of her/his NHMRC grants.

- Program Grant applicant CIs can not apply for more grants than they are eligible to hold at the time of funding, taking into account any grants already held.

#### 4.2 NHMRC Program and Project Grant Eligibility

- i. For Program Grant holders:
  - a. A Chief Investigator on an existing Program Grant is not permitted to hold, or apply for more than one Project Grant.
  - b. At least one Chief Investigator on any such Project Grant or Project Grant application must not be a Chief Investigator on a Program Grant receiving funding in any year in which the Project Grant is funded.
- ii. Researchers who are applying for, or may apply for, a Project Grant must refer to the most recent Project Grant Funding Policy to determine their eligibility to hold, or to apply for additional Project Grants.
- iii. A researcher can be a part-time Chief Investigator on one or two Program Grants. Part-Time Program Grant CIs who hold **one** Program Grant are permitted to hold up to **two** Project Grants. Part-Time Program Grant CIs who hold **two** Program Grant are permitted to hold **no** Project Grants.

Successful Program Grant CIs who would be a CI on more than one Project concurrent with the Program Grant must submit grant variation requests for all Project Grants they will not be retaining, prior to the commencement of funding for the Program Grant.

#### 5. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

In 2010, applicants must submit their applications electronically via NHMRC's Research Grants Management System (RGMS). Selected information from the Curriculum Vitae and Profile components of RGMS will be imported into the application, so it is important that these components are up to date. Information on which sections need to be completed for a Program Grant application is available within RGMS and in the Advice and Instructions document.

Prior to the end of 2009, all current NHMRC grant holders will have received information by email on how to log into RGMS. If you are not a current NHMRC grant holder and wish to access RGMS, please consult <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/rgms/index.htm> for more information.

When completing the application, refer to

- The Program Grants Advice and Instructions to Applicants document and
- *RGMS CAPA (CA Productivity Accelerator)* which is an on-line training and education tool incorporated in RGMS at <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/rgms/index.htm>

### **5.1 Submission of Applications**

Applications for Program Grants open on Wednesday 10 March 2010 and close midnight (AEST) on Tuesday 1 June 2010.

Applications must be submitted by the advertised closing date. Late applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should check whether their Administering Institution has a submission date well in advance of the NHMRC closing date.

Applications must be certified and submitted by a NHMRC registered Administering Institution. Intending applicants and institutions should refer to the *NHMRC Administering Institutions Policy* at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/administ.htm>

Once submitted to NHMRC, the application will be considered final and no changes can be accepted. This includes changes to named Chief Investigators.

The Research Administration Officer will not be able to submit the application until *all* Chief Investigators have certified it.

### **5.2 Withdrawal of Applications**

Applicants may withdraw an application at any time through their Administering Institution's Research Office.

### **5.3 Incomplete, False or Misleading Applications**

The application is the main source of information available for assessment. As such it must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the application without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation, including through the World Wide Web. All details in the application, particularly concerning any successful grants, must be current at the time of application.

Under section 136.1 of the Commonwealth *Criminal Code Act 1995*, it is an offence to provide false or misleading information to a Commonwealth body in an application for a benefit. Such action can be punishable by up to 12 months imprisonment. If an application contains information that is false or misleading, it will be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

If NHMRC believes that omissions or inclusion of misleading information are intentional, it will refer the matter for appropriate legal action. Examples of false or misleading information in an application include, but are not restricted to:

- a) providing a dishonest statement regarding time commitments to the research for which support is being sought;
- b) providing incomplete or inaccurate facts regarding other sources of funding;
- c) providing fictitious track records; or

- d) falsifying claims in publications records (such as describing a paper as accepted for publication when it has only been submitted).

#### **5.4 Responsible Conduct of Research**

NHMRC expects the highest levels of research conduct and integrity to be observed in the research that it funds. Institutions that administer NHMRC grants are bound by the terms of the *Deed of Agreement – Research Funding*, and through this agreement by the requirements of *The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)* (the Code).

The Code, which was issued by NHMRC in partnership with the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, advocates and describes best practice in research for researchers and institutions, as well as the procedures for institutions to follow when there is a breach of the Code.

The primary responsibility of researchers is to conduct research with integrity. Researchers who become aware of research misconduct should follow the process outlined in the Code and can report on scientific misconduct by completing an e-form available from NHMRC website at <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/contact/complaint.htm>

Administering Institutions are required to inform NHMRC of cases of research misconduct and NHMRC may exclude these applications from further assessment if the applicant is found to have committed a serious research misconduct.

#### **5.5 Removal of Applications**

Exclusion of applications may take place at any time during the assessment process if they contravene this funding policy. The following requirements are mandatory:

- a) The application:
  - i) was submitted using RGMS;
  - ii) was submitted electronically by the advertised closing date;
  - iii) declares the source, duration and level of funding already held for research in the particular area of the application;
  - iv) was certified and submitted through the appropriate Research Office of a NHMRC approved Administering Institution;
  - v) was within the specified page limits; and
  - vi) was formatted (including font sizes and margins) as specified in the Advice and Instructions document.
- b) The Research Strategy and Research Achievement PDF file sizes do not exceed 2Mb.

Applications may be excluded under the following circumstances:

- i. the application does not comply with the eligibility criteria (as defined in Section 5 of this document);
- ii. the application includes any incomplete, false or misleading information; or
- iii. the application is inconsistent with the objectives of the NHMRC Act and the purposes of the *Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA)* (refer to sections 3 and 51 of the NHMRC Act).

NHMRC reserves the right to remove from consideration in the peer review process any applications that:

1. do not comply with the requirements of this policy or the Advice and Instructions document; or
2. involves researchers against whom findings of research misconduct have been made.

Applicants must not directly contact Grant Review Panel (GRP) members in relation to their application, or the peer review process. If they do so, their application may be excluded from further consideration. Applicants are to direct any queries to their Institution's Research Administration Office.

## **6. ACCESS TO NHMRC FUNDING**

The NHMRC is seeking to promote collaboration between researchers and is working to remove any artificial barriers to this occurring. However, the NHMRC does not fund the total cost of research. Applicants employed by publicly funded research agencies are required to:

- declare the source, duration and level of funding already held for research in the particular area of the application;
- make a case for NHMRC funding under the policy for the particular funding scheme.

## **7. ASSESSMENT**

### **7.1 Assessment Criteria**

The assessment criteria and weightings have been designed to reflect the nature and intent of the scheme. Program Grant Research Panel (PGRP) members will draw on their field and discipline expertise, and reports provided by external assessors, when scoring the applications.

The assessment criteria and their weightings are specified below:

	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b>
1	Research Achievements	60
2	Research Strategy	20
3	Collaborative Gain	20
	<b>Maximum score</b>	<b>100</b>

### **1. Research Achievements**

Each CI will be given a score of up to **60** points for their Research Achievements.

The applicant team as a whole can receive up to **60** points as its team's Research Achievements score. The applicant team's Research Achievements score will be the average of the individual CIs' scores.

Research Achievements will be interpreted broadly and appropriate judgements about research achievements will be made by PGRPs, paying particular attention to factors

most relevant to the applicants' fields of research, particularly their more recent achievements.

It is recognised that some applicants will have high levels of achievement, but track records that have unusual features, including interruptions (family, illness, industry experience). It is up to the applicants to make the case that a particular level of achievement applies.

The **60** points available for each CI's Research Achievements score will be distributed across two parts; Academic Recognition (**45** points) and Research Application (**15** points).

### **Academic Recognition** **45 points**

The **45** points for Academic Recognition will be distributed across the following three elements:

- Publications\* and/or high quality Technical Reports\*\* **35**
- Grants **5**
- Invitations / Prizes / Awards over Career **5**

\* In terms of Publications, the application should focus on the significant, and likely enduring impacts of and outcomes from published works and not the impact factor of journals in which research is published (though there is often a relationship between the two). It is therefore left to the applicants to make a case in the appropriate section of their application as to how particular research outputs rate against the assessment criteria. Inclusion of information such as journal specialty ranking and citations may assist the PGRP in the scoring process.

\*\* Technical reports can include non-peer reviewed publications that have had a significant impact on health policy and/or practice.

### **Research Application** **15 points**

#### Commercialisation

This may include, without being limited to, for example, contributing to development of intellectual property in collaboration with Biotech or Pharma, founding a Start-Up, or the development and granting of patents etc.

#### **AND/OR**

#### Clinical Application

This may include, without being limited to, for example, being a leader of seminal clinical trials; a crucial advocate for changes in clinical practice based on evidence; an initiator, through to implementation, of clinical practice guidelines; an initiator, through to completion, of change to evaluation of clinical practice, eg national disease register; making other recognized national contributions to policy and health services development etc.

## **AND/OR**

### Public Health Application

This may include, without being limited to, for example, holding a leadership role in design, conduct, publication and advocacy for policy and practice of seminal research; having key responsibility for changes in concept, practice or priority of research implications; being an initiator, through to implementation, of a new system of data collection and organizational feedback eg population-based data collections; making other recognized national contributions to policy and public health practice; being a constructive and effective change agent in public health discipline etc.

Applicants must indicate their specific contributions to any activities identified in the Research Application section.

## **2. Research Strategy**

The **20** points of the application score will be based on the quality of the application's Research Strategy.

The Research Strategy should be consistent with research that is **broadly based, multidisciplinary and collaborative** by nature, and describe how scientific opportunities provided by the collaborations will be exploited. It should also address:

- relevance and/or significance with respect to the field/s of research and/or health outcomes
- national and international competitiveness
- innovation, and potential for contribution to knowledge

## **3. Collaborative Gain**

The **20** points for COLLABORATIVE GAIN will take into account the following four elements:

**Integration of the Research Teams and Program**  
**Team Skills**  
**Resource Management**  
**Intellectual Exchange**

Examples of these four elements include:

- significant productivity gains and the pursuit and achievement of goals permitted by the synergy of the Program's multidisciplinary components, which would otherwise not be possible by pursuing the components as separate projects
- evidence of existing collaborations amongst CIs, and a description of working strategies employed previously or appropriateness of proposed new collaborative arrangements
- integration and cohesiveness of the team, and the likely effectiveness of their working collaborations and intellectual exchange

- collective achievements of previously existing teams and likely impact of new team members
- how the teams will operate and coordinate, including meeting, planning, decision making and financial arrangements
- team skills, and how the team components will combine into a broad theme
- performance measures/milestones
- how junior staff will be integrated into the teams
- mentoring and other development strategies to be adopted
- contribution of each CI.

With new teams, the following will also be taken into account:

- proposed meetings and workplans
- establishment of advisory panels
- research seminars
- explanation of why the new team has not collaborated previously
- plans for geographical collaboration
- benefits, and relevant indicators of potential collaborations and synergy
- measures to ensure accountability.

If the applicants have had the opportunity to collaborate before and have not done so, an explanation will be required as to why this has not occurred and how the direction of their research has now changed to necessitate or allow the new collaboration. They will also need to explain how they will ensure the cohesive running of the grant. This may involve the use of specific contractual arrangements.

## **7.2 Research Involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples**

As part of its commitment to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, the NHMRC has established certain requirements and processes designed to ensure that research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is not only of the highest scientific merit but that it is beneficial and acceptable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NHMRC has also made a commitment to a target of at least 5% of its total research funding being allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

Researchers proposing to do research which specifically relates to the health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, or which includes distinct Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations, biological samples or data, should be aware of, and refer to, the following documents in formulating their proposal:

*The NHMRC Road Map: A Strategic Framework for Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health through Research* – describes broad research themes which were identified through a national consultative process and reflect the health and medical research priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

*Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* – provide guidance to researchers for conceiving and designing research proposals which meet the highest ethical standards and ensure

respect for the principles and values of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture/s in which the research will be conducted.

Applications with significant components concerning the health of Indigenous Australians will be additionally assessed against *The Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians (The Criteria)*. Applications deemed by the NHMRC to address Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health which do not address *The Criteria* may be deemed incomplete and therefore ineligible.

## **8. PEER REVIEW PROCESS**

NHMRC will appoint one or more Program Grant Review Panel/s (PGRP) based on the number and breadth of applications received. The PGRPs will be comprised of experts who will consider applications against the assessment criteria.

### **8.1 Shortlisting**

Applications which the PGRPs consider to be uncompetitive will be removed from further consideration. Applicants will be advised accordingly.

Shortlisted applications will be sent to external assessors for comment. Those shortlisted applicant teams will be interviewed by a PGRP. Prior to the interview, reports from external assessors will be forwarded to the applicants who will be given the opportunity to respond to any issues raised in the reports at interview.

### **8.2 Interviews**

The interviews will be one to two hours in duration. NHMRC may invite additional expert/s with expertise in an application's field/s of research to participate in the interview panels. Applicants will be advised of panel membership 24 hours prior to the interview.

All CIs on competitive applications will be invited to attend the interview. There is a strong expectation that all CIs will attend the interviews. CIs who cannot attend interviews will be expected to provide the NHMRC with adequate explanations and/or documentation i.e medical certificates. They may be offered an opportunity to participate in the interview via teleconference by the NHMRC.

Additional Personnel are not permitted to attend interviews.

A written list of publications that have occurred since the application was submitted may be provided to the PGRP during interview. This document should list the publications in a standard journal format, along with the date the publications were accepted by the publisher. Applicants will not be permitted to provide the PGRP with any other written material, however verbal updates may be provided.

### **8.3 Ranking**

Each PGRP will rank its applications and provide narratives. The PGRPs final rankings and narratives will be presented to Research Committee, which will make funding recommendations (through Council) to the CEO taking into account the NHMRC's Strategic Plan.

The CEO's recommendations will then be forwarded to the Minister for Health and Ageing.

#### **8.4 Advice**

The PGRPs will prepare detailed written reports on each application, highlighting strengths and weaknesses and stating any concerns identified with the application. These reports will then be provided to applicants by the NHMRC when the outcomes of the peer review process are advised.

### **9. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information contained in applications is regarded as confidential unless otherwise indicated and will be received and treated as confidential by NHMRC. It is a legislated responsibility of all NHMRC staff and Committee members not to disclose to any person confidential information to which they become privy as a result of the exercise of their responsibilities to the NHMRC.

Information comprising the names of successful grant applicants and their administering institutions, together with the title of the research project and the funding awarded, are published in the NHMRC Annual Report and are available through the NHMRC website. NHMRC makes publicly available information about the areas of research of the grant and a brief description of the grant provided by the applicant in response to the question in Part A of the application - *Media Summary*.

### **10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The NHMRC is committed to fair review of all grant applications ensuring any conflicts of interest are dealt with consistently, transparently and with rigour. The essence of a quality peer review process demands all participants act in good faith, in an open and sensible manner. The NHMRC has policies in place for conflict of interest situations that may arise in the course of its various activities and these guidelines will assist in the interpretation and implementation of that policy.

All persons involved in the review of Program Grant applications must disclose any potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest to the NHMRC which will, in association with the Chair of the Program Grants Review Panel (PGRP), take steps to ensure that all conflicts of interest are dealt with appropriately.

### **11. PRIVACY**

Documents containing personal information are handled and protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*, which sets standards for the collection, storage, use and disclosure of, and access to, personal information. Personal information is disclosed only with permission of the individual to whom it relates or where the *Privacy Act 1988* allows.

### **12. OUTCOME OF APPLICATIONS**

NHMRC will advise applicants through the nominated Administering Institution's Research Office of the outcome of the application as early as possible following approval of funding. This may be done initially on a confidential basis. If so, NHMRC will regard breaching of this confidentiality as a serious matter.

The advice to applicants will include a short report on the application based on the assessment criteria. The report may identify aspects of the application which were considered to be more, or less, competitive than other applications.

NHMRC will publish the following information on its website for all successful Program Grants:

- application ID;
- all Chief Investigator names;
- administering Institution;
- simplified title; and
- total funding awarded and duration.

The media summary may also be published.

## **13. OBJECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS**

### **13.1 Objections and Complaints**

Applicants may seek clarification on the outcome of their application, or state an objection to that outcome. The objection must be lodged in writing through the Administering Institution's Research Office by completing a form available from the NHMRC website at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/contact/complaint.htm> and be received within 28 days of the date on the letter notifying the outcome of the application.

The objection should be directed to the NHMRC's Chief Executive Officer in the first instance. If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may refer their complaint to the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints, as detailed in section 14.2.

NHMRC will provide a written response to all complaints in line with the NHMRC Complaints Policy which can be found at [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files\\_nhmrc/file/about/contact/policy\\_on\\_complaints.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/file/about/contact/policy_on_complaints.pdf)

### **13.2 Formal complaints to the Commissioner of Complaints**

A person whose interests are affected may at any time lodge a complaint under section 59 of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 2002* (the Act).

Section 61 of the Act provides the Commissioner of Complaints with discretion including, where a complainant has not approached the CEO with the complaint, the Commissioner may choose not to investigate and refer the complaint to the CEO. The Act may be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/role/index.htm>

Complaints to the Commissioner should be addressed to:

NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints  
National Health and Medical Research Council  
GPO Box 1421  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Formal complaints can be mailed to the above address, or sent by email as a PDF letter to [complaints@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:complaints@nhmrc.gov.au)

The complaint must be in writing, be signed by the complainant, describe the action complained about and specify the nature of and grounds for the complaint.

Complaints can only be considered against administrative process and not the merits of a particular decision. The grounds of Complaint are detailed at section 58 of the Act and are that:

- (a) the action involved a breach of the rules of natural justice;
- (b) the action was induced or affected by fraud;
- (c) there was no evidence or other material to justify the action;
- (d) an irrelevant consideration was taken into account in relation to the action;
- (e) a relevant consideration was not taken into account in relation to the action;
- (f) in the course of the action a discretionary power was exercised for a purpose other than the purpose for which the power is conferred;
- (g) the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in bad faith;
- (h) in the course of the action, a personal discretionary power was exercised at the direction of another person;
- (i) the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in accordance with a rule or policy without regard to the merits of the particular case; or
- (j) the action involved any other exercise of a power in a way that constitutes abuse of the power.

Complainants are advised to contact their RAOs prior to making a complaint to the Commissioner.

#### **14. APPROVALS TO BE OBTAINED PRIOR TO FUNDING COMMENCING**

Program Grants provided by NHMRC are often awarded for research that involves the use of humans, animals or genetically modified organisms. All of these activities require oversight by the Administering Institution. Table 1 summarises the approvals that may need to be obtained before funding for a Program Grant can commence. Table 2 lists other considerations that Program Grant applicants must take into account during development of research proposals.

In order to ensure that all research is conducted both ethically and accountably, funding for a Program Grant will not commence until the Administering Institution's RAO has notified NHMRC that all relevant ethical and other approvals and have been provided to the Administering Institution's Research Office. **No funding will be provided on the basis of a provisional approval.**

Where an ethics clearance or regulatory approval is not required until the latter years of a Program Grant and the relevant committee cannot review the proposal without the results of the preliminary findings of the research then, in these exceptional circumstances, NHMRC approval can be sought for the funds to be released. These requests will be considered by NHMRC on a case by case basis. Any research that requires ethics clearance/regulatory approval must not occur until the required approvals are in place.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain the relevant approval required and to forward this to the Administering Institution's Research Office.

The NHMRC reserves the right to request any information in relation to ethical and other approvals and to withdraw the offer of funding if the relevant approvals are not obtained by **1 July** in the year that funding is to commence.

**Table 1: Summary of Approvals and Licenses to be obtained**

<i>Applicants proposing research involving</i>	<i>Action to be taken by Applicants</i>
<b>Human Research</b>	<p>Must have research reviewed by Human Research Ethic Committee (HREC) in accordance with the <i>National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007</i>. Consideration must also be given to the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i></p> <p>Further information is available at:  <a href="http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e35syn.htm">http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e35syn.htm</a></p>
<b>Animal Research</b>	<p>Research funded by NHMRC that involve the use of animals must be reviewed and approved by an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) in accordance with the <i>Code for the Care and Use of Animals in Scientific Research</i></p> <p>Further information is available at:  <a href="http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ea16syn.htm">http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ea16syn.htm</a></p>
<b>Generation or use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)</b>	<p>All work involving the generation or use of GMOs must be assessed by the Administering Institution's Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) before commencement. In addition, this work may also require a licence to be issued by the Gene Technology Regulator.</p> <p>Further information is available from: the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) <a href="http://www.ogtr.gov.au">http://www.ogtr.gov.au</a></p>
<b>Human Embryo Research</b>	<p>All research involving human embryos requires a licence issued by the Licensing Committee of the NHMRC in accordance with <i>Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002 (RIHE Act)</i> and <i>Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002 (PHCR Act)</i>.</p> <p>For further information refer to the NHMRC website at:  <a href="http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/embryos/index.htm">http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/embryos/index.htm</a></p>

**Table 2: Other considerations relevant to Program Grant Applicants**

<i>Applicants proposing research involving</i>	<i>Guidelines to be considered by Applicants</i>
<b>Health Research Involving Aboriginal</b>	<p>Ethical applications for research that involves the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be developed</p>

**and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** with reference to the *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*

Further information is available from the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm>

**Use of Carcinogenic or Highly Toxic Chemicals** All research that involves the use of carcinogenic or highly toxic chemicals must adhere to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) guidelines, *National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets*

Further information is available from the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) web site at <http://www.ascc.gov.au/ascc/>

**Use of datasets for research purposes** The use of datasets for research purposes must comply with the *Minimum Guidelines for Health Registers for Statistical and Research Purposes*

Further information is available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/9792>

## **15. ADMINISTRATION OF NHMRC GRANTS**

### **15.1 Deed of Agreement**

All NHMRC Program Grants are offered in accordance with a Deed of Agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution. This Deed of Agreement includes Schedules that detail specific conditions for each grant (e.g. budget). Details of the Deed of Agreement can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/manage/policy/deeds.htm>

Requests to vary the terms contained in the Deed of Agreement or its Schedule must be submitted to NHMRC in writing by the Administering Institution.

### **15.2 Payments**

Subject to appropriations provided by the Commonwealth Department of Finance and Administration, payment of funds will be made to Administering Institutions in regular instalments, in accordance with approved payment arrangements made for assistance provided from the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA). Funds must be used only for the purposes approved and detailed in the Deed of Agreement and its Schedule.

### **15.3 Research Misconduct**

Research funded by NHMRC must comply with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, which can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r39syn.htm>

NHMRC funding agreements contain provisions for the handling of allegations of research misconduct. Applicants are referred to sections 15.1 -15.5 of the *NHMRC Deed of Agreement - Research Funding Schemes*. (See section 15.1 for further information).

## **15.4 Intellectual property**

Applicants in receipt of NHMRC Program Grant support must agree to comply with the Interim Guidelines Intellectual Property Management for Health and Medical Research available at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/ipmanage.htm>

## **16. REPORTING ON NHMRC PROGRAM GRANTS**

### **16.1 Annual Progress Reports and Financial Reports**

Annual progress and financial reports will be required by 31 March of each year on the form prescribed by NHMRC. At the completion of the grant, a final report and financial acquittal will be required by 30 June of the following year. These final reports will be regarded by NHMRC as public documents and will be placed in the public domain. The reporting requirements can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply/projects/index.htm>

NHMRC may suspend payment of further instalments of any current grant until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

Where an institution fails to submit satisfactory reports, as required, NHMRC may withhold the remainder of the institution's payments under the scheme for the current year or initiate recovery of funding.

### **16.2 Dissemination of Scientific Results**

To maximise the benefits from research and as broadly as possible allow access by other researchers and the wider community, NHMRC encourages researchers and Administering Institutions to

- Promote responsible publication and dissemination of the research findings;
- Disseminate all research findings; and
- Disclose research support accurately

Section 4 of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, outlines these and other responsibilities of Institutions and Researchers, which apply to all forms of dissemination.

Researchers should also consider the benefits of depositing their data and any publications arising from a research project in an appropriate subject and/or institutional repository wherever such a repository is available to the researcher(s). Any research outputs that have been or will be deposited in appropriate repositories should be identified in the Final Report. Further information regarding NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings can be obtained from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination.htm>

## **17. FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information, the Administering Institution's Research Office should be contacted in the first instance.

Further information can be obtained from the NHMRC's website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/apply/index.htm>

Enquiries about applying for Program Grants can be emailed to the NHMRC at:

[program.grants.preaward@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:program.grants.preaward@nhmrc.gov.au)

The NHMRC's GrantNet Help Desk can be contacted on:

Phone: 1800 500 983

E-mail: [grantnet.help@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:grantnet.help@nhmrc.gov.au)

*Please note that queries about **existing** or **previous** Program Grants should be emailed to:*

[Postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:Postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au)