



## FACT SHEET

INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH

RESEARCH • ETHICS • ADVICE • COMPLIANCE &amp; EVALUATION

### Values and Ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

*Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* was endorsed at the 148th Session of the National Health and Medical Research Council in June 2003.

These guidelines replace the 1991 *Interim Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*, following feedback that the 1991 Guidelines needed to be reviewed.

Extensive community engagement and consultation was conducted at the outset of the revision of the guidelines and throughout the course of their development, culminating in the holding of a national workshop in Ballarat in June 2002 that was attended by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, elders and community representatives. This workshop provided the foundation for the content of the guidelines, which are written around a framework of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and principles.

The new guidelines cover many of the same points and requirements of researchers as the 1991 Guidelines. However, the new guidelines are less prescriptive in style, instead insisting on more substantive engagement by researchers with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and values.

The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* provides the main guidelines that must be followed for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but *Values and Ethics* introduces additional requirements for developing and conducting research in a manner that is respectful and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultures.

*Values and Ethics* comprises background information and details the six values and ethics that form the core component of the guidelines, which are:

1. Reciprocity;
2. Respect;
3. Equality;
4. Responsibility;
5. Survival and protection; and
6. Spirit and Integrity.

Implementation strategies have been developed to assist stakeholders in the practical application of the guidelines and include:

- the inclusion of the guidelines in the National Training Program for Human Research Ethics Committees conducted in 2004, which included the development of additional educational materials for the program; and
- the drafting of a 'Community Guide' to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to engage effectively in ethical research.

The 'Community Guide' is being developed by a committee consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, and is being piloted at various sites around Australia. It will be available in late 2005, on the NHMRC website at [www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au).