Public consultation opens on draft *Principles and guidelines for the care and use of non-human primates for scientific purposes*

The National Health and Medical Research Council has today opened public consultation on the draft *Principles and guidelines for the care and use of non-human primates for scientific purposes*.

The document provides advice on best practice for the care and use of non-human primates and is intended to be read in conjunction with the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (8th edition, 2013).

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said the document plays an important role in ensuring that high standards are applied to all aspects of the care and use of non-human primates in research.

“Non-human primates are our closest genetic relatives. Consequently, they can have a valuable role to play in scientific research, but for the same reason, their use requires especially rigorous scrutiny by animal ethics committees and regulators,” Professor Anderson said.

“In every state and territory, there are already strict requirements that must be met before non-human primates can be used for scientific purposes, including approval by an institutional animal ethics committee,” he said.

“This revised document provides clear principles to guide decisions about the use of non-human primates, and up-to-date guidance for the care of non-human primates.”

The document emphasises the need for any use of non-human primates to be specifically justified and also prohibits the use of some types of non-human primates, except when there is a clear benefit to the individual animal or their species.

As within the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, the document also promotes the three Rs: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement.

In implementing the three Rs, researchers must consider alternatives to the use of non-human primates in the first instance. If the use of non-human primates is essential and justified,
Researchers must use as few as possible, and when doing so, must always employ strategies to minimise any harm or discomfort.

The draft Principles and guidelines for the care and use of non-human primates for scientific purposes document was developed by an expert working committee that included members with expertise in animal welfare as well as the care of non-human primates, and overseen by NHMRC’s Animal Welfare Committee.

Following this consultation, the document will replace NHMRC’s Policy on the Care and Use of Non-Human Primates for Scientific Purposes published in 2003.

Public consultation on the draft Principles and guidelines for the care and use of non-human primates for scientific purposes closes on 8 May at 5:00pm AEST. The NHMRC public consultation portal will be open to accept submissions on this draft document from 2 April. For further information, visit the NHMRC public consultation portal.

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