



**Australian Government**

**National Health and Medical Research Council**

# Information Publication Scheme Plan

## Office of the National Health and Medical Research Council

UPDATED: 26 MAY 2014

### Introduction

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*. It comprises the Chief Executive Officer, Council, Principal Committees, and the Office of the NHMRC.

- NHMRC is the Australian Government's key agency for:
- managing investment in health and medical research
- developing evidence-based health advice for the Australian community, health professionals and government
- providing advice on ethical practice in health care and in the conduct of health and medical research.

NHMRC brings together these functions into a single national organisation, contributing to Australians' improved life expectancy, improved health and growing economy.

NHMRC will, through its activities, communication and published information, continue to demonstrate to the Australian people, the Australian Government and the Australian research community, the benefits that result from health and medical research and the NHMRC's activities.

### Purpose

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that its operations are transparent and that it consults widely in the development of its advice and guidelines. The Office of the NHMRC, on behalf of the CEO and Council of NHMRC, manages consultation processes and the grants application and assessment process.

The Office of the NHMRC has prepared this Information Publication Scheme Plan (the Plan) under section 8(1) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1988* (the FOI Act).

It outlines how we will:

- give the Australian community access to information we hold,
- increase public participation in our processes, so that we can achieve better-informed decision-making, and
- increase the extent to which NHMRC can become a national resource for information about the conduct of health and medical research in Australia.

## Objectives

Our Plan sets out our mechanisms and procedures to:

- a) proactively identify and publish all information we are required to publish, including this Plan, under the FOI Act (s 8(2))
- b) proactively identify and publish the additional information we will publish FOI Act (s 8(4))
- c) ensure regular review and assurance that information published under the Information Publication Scheme is accurate, up-to-date and complete FOI Act (s 8B)
- d) ensure that information published under the Information Publication Scheme can be readily accessed, is understandable and useable by the reader
- e) ensure that the format of online content conforms with the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (Version 2)*, and
- f) measure the success of NHMRC's Information Publication Scheme.

## Establishing an Information Publication Scheme

### Roles and Responsibilities

The CEO and his staff all have a role in complying with the requirements of the FOI Act. The General Manager of the Office of the NHMRC has overall responsibility for NHMRC's compliance with the FOI Act. This includes the establishment and maintenance of the Information Publication Scheme.

The Executive Director, Strategic Policy Group, has day-to-day responsibility for managing NHMRC's compliance with the FOI Act. We will ensure that information held on NHMRC website, is accessible, meets Government standards, is kept up to date, and that any broken links are corrected as quickly as possible.

The Freedom of Information Coordinator is responsible for managing the NHMRC's responses to individual requests for access to information under the FOI Act.

### Identifying information for publication

In developing this Plan, NHMRC audited the information required to be published by the FOI Act and mapped this against our existing NHMRC website. In addition, we identified a range of Government guidelines and better practice guides to assist us in our program management, including decision-making.

We have listed those guidelines on our website and provided links. This plan, and the information published under it, is available from our website, under a specific icon on the home page, and through our FOI page.

### Disclosure log

The NHMRC Disclosure Log is available from our website, under a specific icon on the home page, and through our FOI page. Where possible and reasonable to do so, the information released under FOI decisions will be made directly available. However, where there are technical constraints on our capacity to provide information in an electronic form, we will provide detailed information about the information we have released and how it can be accessed.

### Compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

The National Medical Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) takes seriously the obligation to make the information on its website accessible to all Australians.

All content hosted on the NHMRC website is designed and constructed in accordance with the World Wide Web Consortium's *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines: Audio, Colour blindness, Visual acuity, Peripheral compatibility*.

NHMRC is committed to the Australian Government's adoption and implementation of *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0 (WCAG 2.0)*, under the *Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy*. WCAG 2.0 sets an improved level of accessibility to cater to the needs of a constantly evolving and increasingly dynamic web environment. This is an ongoing process and the NHMRC expects to be fully WCAG 2.0 compliant (Level AA) by 2014.

## Access charges

We are committed to providing appropriate access to our information, including providing on our website. For this reason NHMRC does not intend to impose access charges.

If we do identify that there is a need to introduce access charges in the future, we will not do so without alerting the community before we develop those charges.

## NHMRC's information architecture

Documents on our website will be made available in formats consistent with best practice guidelines as defined by the WCAG 1.0 and WCAG 2.0 guidelines as: html, PDF, and in some cases RTF/Word format. We will provide appropriate support information and links, for example Adobe Reader.

NHMRC subscribes to the Commonwealth Library Deposit and Free Issue Scheme, ensuring that our publications are stored in national and state repositories.

In the main, NHMRC releases publications through its website, restricting printed hard-copy to key corporate documents (e.g. Annual Reports) and documents that are likely to be required in hard-copy (e.g. guidelines for child care centres).

NHMRC publishes datasets on its website. These datasets are accessible from the NHMRC website under Research funding statistics and data at [Research Funding statistics and data](#).

## Information required to be published

In accordance with Section 8(2) of the FOI Act, the NHMRC will publish:

1. this Plan including plans to review compliance with the Plan (s8(2)(a)).
2. information about the structure of NHMRC depicted in an organisation chart (s8(2)(b)).
3. information about the functions and decision making powers of the NHMRC, and operational information including:
  - a. deadlines for applications for research grant funding;
  - b. research grant application kits;
  - c. guidelines for organisations seeking NHMRC approval of a third-party guideline;
  - d. guidelines relating to other NHMRC programs, practices; and
  - e. precedents that assist the NHMRC to make decisions or recommendations affecting members of the public (s8(2)(c) and (j)).
4. guidelines that are developed and disseminated by other agencies and upon which the NHMRC relies when making decisions (e.g. *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines*).
5. information about statutory appointments under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, the *Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002* and the *Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002* – this includes the Chief Executive Officer, members of the Council and Principal Committees of NHMRC, and the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints (s8(2)(d)).
6. NHMRC's reports to Parliament – including NHMRC's Annual Reports, Biannual reports to Parliament of the NHMRC Embryo Research Licensing Committee, and responses to Senate Standing Orders (s8(2)(e) and (h)).
7. information about NHMRC's public consultation procedures and details of how the community can comment on specific issues (s8(2)(f)).
8. details about information in documents to which the NHMRC routinely gives access (s8(2)(g)). This will include the annual report of the Commissioner of Complaints and the NHMRC's disclosure log.
9. contact details including the name, telephone number and email address, of the NHMRC's Freedom of Information Officer (s8(2)(i)).

## Optional information

We will publish additional information that may be helpful to the community and will continue to develop this information in consultation with our stakeholders. Our additional information will include:

- priorities for the triennium set out in the NHMRC's Strategic Plan.
- datasets of funded research. This information will be provided in a format that allows information to be sorted. Initially information can be sorted by health area. It is NHMRC's intention to improve sorting capability over time.
- complaints procedures (for matters other than those that can be investigated by the Commissioner of Complaints).
- the Office of the *NHMRC Enterprise Agreement*.
- Portfolio Budget Statements relevant to NHMRC setting out the NHMRC's resources, outcomes and planned performance for the financial year.
- other financial information including expenditure on legal services in accordance with *Legal Services Directions 2005*.
- NHMRC's Annual Procurement Plan.
- response to Senate Standing Order of Contracts >\$100,000.
- response to Senate Standing Orders request for File Lists.

## Administering the NHMRC's Information Publication Scheme

To meet our obligations under the Information Publication Scheme, the General Manager of the Office of NHMRC will:

- ensure NHMRC has in place an information asset management framework within which the Scheme will operate
- establish an information register and disclosure log to support information publication, and
- publish details of any charges that may be levied subject to guidance from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

The Strategic Policy Group will work across the Office of the NHMRC to review the NHMRC's information holdings and compliance with the Information Publication Scheme and report to the General Manager of the Office of the NHMRC on a regular basis.

We will consult regularly with our committees and Council on this work, ensuring that we continue to take the views of the research community, consumer representatives and our other stakeholder groups into account.

All Executive, senior staff and staff with supervisory duties will be responsible for ensuring that information published relevant to their programs remains accurate and up to date and that record keeping is in accordance with best practice. Accountability for this will be included in annual performance reviews.

Other key roles are:

- Director Information and Communication Management – will assist with accessibility to information;
- Director Information and Communication Technology – will monitor performance of the NHMRC website; and
- Director, Business Services – will support good records management within the organisation.

We will conduct annual, in-house reviews of the information published on our website to ensure that it is up to date and relevant, and that any new opportunities to publish information are taken.

## Review of the Information Publication Scheme

### Annual Review by NHMRC

The Office of the NHMRC will conduct an in-house review of its compliance with the Information Publication Scheme on an annual basis. The Executive Director, Strategic Policy Group is responsible for this review. Each review aims to identify gaps in information, any operational difficulties that were experienced during the year (e.g. website downtime) and how they were addressed, lessons learned from previous reporting periods, and recommendations for improving or maintaining the NHMRC's commitment to the Information Publication Scheme. NHMRC will advise the community on when a review has been undertaken, and what information has been added or updated, via its [Information Publication Scheme webpage](#).

### Formal review in conjunction with the Information Commissioner

In accordance with the FOI Act (s9), we will work with the Information Commissioner to conduct a formal review of the NHMRC's response to the Information Publication Scheme.

The first formal review will be completed by May 2016 unless the Information Commissioner requests an earlier review date. In either event, the full timetable for the review will be agreed with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner and published on the NHMRC website.

### Performance measurement

NHMRC notes that the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner will provide guidance to assist agencies to undertake compliance reviews. NHMRC will adopt that guidance to the fullest extent possible. In addition, NHMRC will assess the balance of "required" and "optional" information it publishes, with an expectation that optional information will increase over time.

## Further information

More information about the Office of the NHMRC's Information Publication Scheme Plan and its FOI Processes is available from the FOI Coordinator at [nfoi@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:nfoi@nhmrc.gov.au).