

National Mutual Acceptance

Ethical review arrangements for Multi-Jurisdiction Data Linkage studies

Guidance Document

Overview

The National Mutual Acceptance (NMA) scheme has been revised to better support the requirements of researchers undertaking multi-jurisdiction data linkage studies.

Researchers undertaking studies involving linkage of data across participating NMA jurisdictions can apply for ethical review through a number of [specialist NMA HRECs](#). The ethical and scientific approval of one of these HRECs will be accepted by public health organisations within participating NMA jurisdictions in accordance with standard NMA approval processes.

As with all NMA HREC applications, data linkage projects will need to undergo any local research governance processes that may apply including the endorsement of relevant local data custodians.

Researchers are encouraged to contact the relevant data custodian/s or data linkage unit to discuss the requirements for their project as soon as possible in the planning stages of the project, prior to the submission of the ethics application.

How does this affect my research?

If you are conducting a study involving linkage of data across participating NMA jurisdictions, this arrangement provides an expedited pathway for ethical approval.

Researchers are now able to submit data linkage applications to one of the specialist HRECs identified in this document. Approval from the reviewing HREC will be accepted by all public health organisations within participating NMA jurisdictions.

Exclusions

It should be noted that studies involving data held by public health organisations within WA and NT will still need to undergo a separate/local HREC review.

Where there are specific cultural or population-based considerations relating to the population being studied, the ethical review from another HREC with expertise in the specific population group will continue to apply¹.

¹ E.g. research proposals involving Aboriginal participants.

Application Processes

1. Research Ethics

The Human Research Ethics Application (HREA) form, available through the relevant [jurisdictional research management system](#) (please refer to jurisdiction-specific information), along with any local submission requirements, will be required for all proposals submitted to one of the specialist data linkage HRECs under the NMA scheme.

2. Research Governance

All jurisdictions have research governance requirements that must be satisfied prior to a research study commencing. This is typically the submission and authorisation of a site specific assessment (SSA) form or an alternative research governance form/process. Researchers are advised to contact the local [jurisdictional health office](#) to discuss requirements for data linkage studies.

Arrangements for WA, Tasmania and NT (public health organisations)

For linked data studies involving locally held datasets of public health organisations within Tasmania, Tasmania DHHS agrees to accept the approval of one of the specialist HRECs listed below.

Northern Territory Health and Western Australia Health are not currently accepting data linkage projects under NMA. In these jurisdictions, a local HREC approval will need to be sought.

Studies involving data held by the Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth Government is not currently a party to the NMA scheme. Any applications involving data held by the Commonwealth Government including by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) will need to undergo ethical approval by the appropriate Commonwealth Government HREC.

Specialist NMA Data Linkage HRECs

The following HRECs have been selected as expert data linkage HRECs able to provide the single scientific and ethical review of data linkage studies under the NMA scheme.

Jurisdiction	HREC	Contact Details
QLD	Townsville Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00183)	TSV-Ethics-Committee@health.qld.gov.au Ph: (07) 4433 1440
	Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital (RBWH) HREC (EC00172)	RBWH-Ethics@health.qld.gov.au Ph: (07) 3646 6132 / (07) 3646 6933 / (07) 3646 5490
	Metro South Hospital and Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee (EC0017)	MSH-Ethics@health.qld.gov.au Ph: (07) 3443 8049
	The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) HREC (EC00168)	ResearchTPCH@health.qld.gov.au Ph (07) 3139 4500
NSW	NSW Population and Health Services HREC (EC00410)	CINSW-Ethics@health.nsw.gov.au Ph: (02) 8374 5689
VIC	Alfred Health HREC (EC00315)	research@alfred.org.au Ph: (03) 9076 8825
	Austin Health HREC (EC00204)	ethics@austin.org.au Ph: (03) 9496 4070
	Melbourne Health HREC (EC00243)	research@mh.org.au Ph: (03) 9342 8530
	Monash Health HREC (EC00382)	research@monashhealth.org Ph: (03) 9594 4611
	Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre HREC (EC00235)	ethics@petermac.org Ph: (03) 8559 7542
	Royal Children's Hospital (Melbourne) HREC (EC00238)	rch.ethics@rch.org.au Ph: (03) 9345 5044
	St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) HREC (EC00343)	research.ethics@svhm.org.au Ph: (03) 9231 2394
SA	SA Department for Health and Wellbeing HREC (EC00304)	Health.humanresearchethicscommittee@sa.gov.au Ph: (08) 8226 7702
ACT	ACT Health Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00100)	ethics@act.gov.au Ph: (02) 5124 3949

Data Linkage Units

Contact details for the local State/Territory data linkage units are available at the following [webpage](#).

Further Information

For further information on the NMA scheme, please contact your local State/Territory research office using the contact details below.

Jurisdiction	Office	Website	Email	Phone
Australian Capital Territory	Research Ethics and Governance Office	www.health.act.gov.au/datapublications/research/humanresearch-ethics-committee	ethics@act.gov.au	(02) 5124 7968
New South Wales	Office for Health and Medical Research	www.health.nsw.gov.au/ethics	researchethics@doh.nsw.gov.au	(02) 9391 9220
Queensland	Research, Ethics and Governance Health Innovation, Investment and Research Office	www.health.qld.gov.au/ohmr/html/regu/regu_home	hiiro_reg@health.qld.gov.au	(07) 3708 5071
South Australia	Office for Research	www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/researchethics	Health.DHAResearch@sa.gov.au	(08) 8226 4235
Victoria	Coordinating Office for Clinical Trial Research	https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/clinical-trials-and-research	multisite.ethics@dhhs.vic.gov.au	(03) 9096 7394
Western Australia	Research Development Unit	https://rgs.health.wa.gov.au	researchdevelopment@health.wa.gov.au	(08) 9222 6413
Tasmania	Office of the Deputy Chief Medical Officer	https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/research	Jodi.johnson-glading@health.tas.gov.au	(03) 6166 0413
Northern Territory		https://health.nt.gov.au/health-governance/department-of-health/committees-regulations-advisory-groups/human-research-ethics-committee	ethics@menzies.edu.au	