



# NHMRC National Scientific Committees

hosted by Bellberry Limited

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## National Scientific Committees

Standard Operating Procedure:  
Committee Chairperson and Members

All enquiries and for further information about NHMRC National Scientific Committees, contact Bellberry Limited:

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Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council



Bellberry Limited  
supporting research and ethics

## PURPOSE

To outline the procedures for the appointment, orientation and responsibilities of Committee members in the National Scientific Committee Pilot (the Pilot).

### 1 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- 1.1 The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bellberry will identify and nominate potential Panel members from which Committee members will be drawn. Recruitment will be conducted via advertisement, referral or direct approach.
- 1.2 NHMRC will review potential Panel members to ensure that:
  - (a) Panel members have suitable expertise, and
  - (b) the Panel does not include any member against whom an allegation of research misconduct has been proven or who is otherwise excluded from receiving funds from NHMRC on conduct grounds.
- 1.3 NHMRC will notify the CEO of the outcomes of its review of potential members within five working days.
- 1.4 Once a potential member is approved by NHMRC, the CEO will appoint the member directly.
- 1.5 Appointment to the Panel will be on the basis of engagement as a consultant; the legal relationship between the Panel member and Bellberry is that of independent contractor. There is no legal relationship between the Panel member and NHMRC.
- 1.6 The appointment process will include training, induction and administrative requirements.
- 1.7 Subject to NHMRC approval, members may be added to the Panel at any time.
- 1.8 A prospective Panel member may be invited to attend a Committee meeting as an observer subject to a confidentiality agreement being signed.
- 1.9 The CEO will, in consultation with NHMRC, appoint a Chairperson of each Committee having regards to:
  - (a) the member's expertise
  - (b) the member's responsibilities outside of the work of the Committee
  - (c) the member not being the Chairperson of an Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to which the Committee's advice will be provided, if known.

## 2 TERM OF APPOINTMENT

- 2.1 Members will initially be appointed to the Panel for a period of 12 months or the duration of the Pilot (whichever ends first). Members will be advised when their term has expired.
- 2.2 Members will be provided with a written notice outlining their duration of appointment, their responsibilities and duties as a Committee member and meeting attendance requirements.

## 3 CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

- 3.1 Panel members must undertake to become familiar with and be willing to fulfil the duties and responsibilities of a Committee member.
- 3.2 Members must sign a Confidentiality Agreement and a Disclosure of Interests form related to Committee deliberations, applications submitted for review and related matters and disclose any interests that may constitute an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.
- 3.3 Indemnity for members is provided by Bellberry for any liabilities that may arise as a result of the members exercising their duties as a member of the Committee.
- 3.4 Members must be willing to be trained in and utilise a web-based system, eProtocol, to undertake the review of research projects and submit comments.
- 3.5 Members will be remunerated for review activities. Remuneration recognises the requirement to provide both quality and timeliness of review. Remuneration is not dependent on review outcome. Members will be held accountable to both quality and timeliness of review.
- 3.6 Approval from the CEO and NHMRC must be obtained before a member may represent, act on behalf of or make public representations regarding the Committee or the Pilot.
- 3.7 Members must agree to their name being placed on the National Scientific Committees website and made available to NHMRC and relevant regulatory authorities such as the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and the United States' Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

## 4 ORIENTATION, INDUCTION AND EDUCATION

- 4.1 Panel members will be given orientation information that outlines their rights and obligations.
- 4.2 The orientation documents that will be provided to new members include:
  - (a) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), incorporating all updates

- (b) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures of the National Scientific Committee and any relevant Bellberry documents
  - (c) Bellberry contact details and directions to Bellberry offices
  - (d) a list of Panel members with contact details
- 4.3 Induction may involve some or all of the following:
- (a) one or more informal meetings with the CEO/Deputy Chief Executive/Operations Manager and/or Committee Manager to explain Committee member responsibilities, and relevant policies and procedures
  - (b) training on eProtocol
  - (c) introduction to other Panel members
  - (d) an opportunity to sit in on a Committee meeting before the appointment takes effect.
- 4.4 Members will be given the opportunity to attend relevant training and education sessions to assist with development.

## 5 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- 5.1 Committee members have the right to:
- (a) bring any matter within the scope of the National Scientific Committee's Terms of Reference to the attention of the Chairperson or CEO
  - (b) review and comment on checklists written in the NSC meeting, and any changes made following meetings
  - (c) request an amendment of any meeting minutes or a draft report on the grounds that they are inaccurate
  - (d) any difference of opinion will be recorded
  - (e) have their personal information handled according to Bellberry privacy policy and, to the extent that information is handled by NHMRC, according to the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).
- 5.2 Committee members are obliged to advise the Chairperson or Bellberry Operations Manager of:
- (a) any inability to attend a scheduled meeting for unexpected reasons
  - (b) any planned absence
  - (c) their resignation from the Committee.

## 6 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 6.1 Committee members will sign a confidentiality agreement confirming that they will not:
- (a) discuss any matters relating to Committee discussions and deliberations, with the exception that questions of a general nature that do not divulge commercially sensitive or confidential information may be discussed with other relevant experts for the purposes of gaining further knowledge to assist with Committee deliberations. Where the view of a non-Committee member (i.e. another Panel member or other relevant expert) has been sought this must be disclosed in the meeting minutes and recorded in the final report
  - (b) compromise intellectual property, commercial-in-confidence information or participant confidentiality (e.g. in dealing with complaints).
- 6.2 Members will ensure the security of any documents that they receive at all times.
- 6.3 Members will securely destroy, shred or return to Bellberry any confidential printed material and securely delete any confidential electronic documents that are no longer required.
- 6.4 Members will adhere to the following protocol to ensure that confidential information is kept secure:
- (a) avoid downloading any documents from eProtocol to a USB/memory stick or hard drive
  - (b) avoid using public computers to access eProtocol
  - (c) set a secure password for eProtocol (i.e. combination of upper and lower case letters, numbers and symbols) and change as instructed
  - (d) limit disclosure of the password to Bellberry staff
  - (e) where operating systems and internet browsers automatically create a download of documents upon opening and save these to the desktop or a download folder, ensure that automatically saved documents are securely deleted and the trash emptied at the close of each user session
  - (f) sign out of eProtocol when a session has been finished
  - (g) keep any relevant computer software, personal firewall and antivirus protection up to date
  - (h) comply with any other IT security policy as determined by Bellberry.
- 6.5 Members will only use an email address that is not shared with work

associates, friends or family members and will maintain access to a computer with an internet connection that permits use of the eProtocol online system.

## 7 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 7.1 Upon appointment and with respect to the review of any individual research project, Committee members will disclose any interests that may constitute an actual or potential conflict of interest, including any:
- (a) personal involvement or participation in the research
  - (b) financial or other interest or affiliation associated with the research, or
  - (c) involvement in competing research.
- 7.2 Members will review the agenda for each meeting and disclose any relevant interests to the Chairperson as soon as possible and no later than the commencement of a Committee meeting in which the member is participating.
- 7.3 The Chairperson will determine how the interest is to be managed. Where a conflict is determined to exist, the relevant member may be able to participate in discussions at the meeting, but not in any deliberative decisions of the Committee.
- 7.4 The Chairperson will notify the CEO or Operations Manager of any disclosed interests and any determination of a conflict of interest. If a conflict of interest has been determined to exist and the decision is made that the relevant member must withdraw from participation in the meeting.
- 7.5 All assessments and decisions involving potential conflicts of interest will be recorded in the meeting minutes and the final report.

## 8 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIRPERSON

- 8.1 The Chairperson is accountable to Bellberry and reports to the CEO or delegate.
- 8.2 The Chairperson will ensure that all research is reviewed appropriately and in accordance with NHMRC guidelines (e.g. the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007), and that Committee has the capacity to conduct its business by:
- (a) providing leadership to the Committee in relevant deliberative processes
  - (b) conducting meetings in an effective, timely and efficient manner in accordance with the Committee Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures
  - (c) reaching an agreed outcome for each research proposal review

- (d) in accordance with mechanisms to be developed by Bellberry, undertaking a review and acceptance function for minor clarifications or submissions of requested additional information as relevant to a research proposal reviewed by the Committee
- (e) upon request, contributing to any assessment of the National Scientific Committee pilot.

## 9 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

- 9.1 Committee members are accountable to Bellberry and report to the Committee Manager.
- 9.2 Members will ensure that all research is reviewed appropriately and in accordance with NHMRC guidelines (e.g. the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007).
- 9.3 Members will submit their comments on projects listed on the agenda to eProtocol by 8:00am on the day prior to the meeting and actively participate in Committee meetings.
- 9.4 In their comments and in Committee deliberations, members will confine their discussion to the scientific merit and integrity of the project, including:
  - (a) the rigour of the project design
  - (b) the sufficiency and appropriateness of any statistical analysis
  - (c) the value of referenced research and relevance of associated findings
  - (d) the wording of any participant information as it relates to an explanation of the scientific rationale, risks or benefits of the proposed research.