



Title	<b>HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE COMPLAINTS PROCESS</b>		
Type	<b>Policy</b>	Responsibility	<b>Chairperson HREC</b>
Department	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>	Authorised by	<b>Chairperson Human Research Ethics Committee</b>
Section	<b>Ethics</b>		

<b>Areas applicable</b>	
<b>Areas NOT applicable</b>	
<b>Variations from previous version</b>	
<b>Other individuals/Groups consulted</b>	
<b>Ward and / or Staffing considerations</b>	
<b>Related documents</b>	

**Purpose:**

To ensure that all complaints received either regarding the Northeast Health Wangaratta Human Research Ethics Committee (NHW HREC) processes or relating to a specific approved research project are dealt with promptly and all parties in the complaints process are understanding of the outcomes.

**Policy Outcome Statement:**

NHW's policy on Human Research Ethics and research related complaints is that all will be acknowledged and investigated in an organised prompt and responsible manner.

Upon receipt of the complaint, a letter of acknowledgment, prepared by the NHW HREC Secretary and undersigned by the NHW HREC Chairperson will be sent to the complainant within 7 days.

The complaint is then sent to the NHW Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

All complaints will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality.

All NHW HREC complaints received will be investigated through appropriate channels and outcomes recorded. Complainants will receive a detailed letter of reply following investigation and if not satisfied, details of how to further address their issues.

**Definition:**

**Procedure:**

Complaints concerning NHW HREC Committee review processes

1. Principal Researchers who object to a decision by NHW HREC should direct their concerns to the Ethics Chairperson. In appropriate circumstances, a request for re-consideration by the committee in question may be submitted and will be taken up at the next meeting of that committee at which the researcher is welcome to attend.
2. The NHW HREC must clearly outline for the researcher the decisions regarding the complaint including the reasoning for the decision.

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3. Further objections can be raised through the NHW CEO or delegate who will follow NHW Complaints Policy to attempt to resolve the issues and respond in writing to the researcher.
4. If the researcher is still not satisfied, they may seek a meeting with the Chairperson or delegate of the NHW HREC and the NHW CEO or delegate. The researchers maybe accompanied by one or more colleagues. A record of any such meeting should be kept. Advice maybe sought from the Australian Health Ethics Committee.
5. The institution and the researcher may agree on a person who can take the role of mediator, not necessarily a professional mediator, in an attempt to resolve the dispute. The institution should bear the costs of such mediation.
6. The mediator should consider the complaint, the reason(s) for the committee’s original decision (from the minutes of the relevant meeting), the advice, if any, provided by the Australian Health Ethics committee and the record of the meeting with the chairperson and the CEO or delegate, as above. Having considered this material, the mediator should then meet with the parties, attempt to facilitate a resolution of outstanding issues and provide a report of the results of that meeting to the institution.
7. If the matter remains unresolved despite such steps being taken, the final decision rests with NHW HREC.

**Complaints Concerning the Conduct of Research.**

1. All complaints about the conduct of research at NHW are referred to the NHW CEO or delegate who will respond, investigate and reply to the complaint in accordance with NHW Complaints Policy. At all times the NHW HREC Chairperson will be informed of complaints about the conduct of research at NHW.
2. The CEO or delegate may in the course of resolving the complaint discuss issues with the NHW HREC. The NHW HREC may withdraw approval and stop the project until all issues are resolved. At all times the researcher will be fully informed of all decisions in writing.

**References:**

NHMRC – Human Research Ethics Handbook May 2013, (Chapter 5.6)  
[National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\) - Updated May 2015 | National Health and Medical Council | Working to build a healthy Australia](#)  
**Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre Ethics Review & Approval Policy 2003.**

Authorised by	Title	Chairperson Human Research Ethics Committee
	Signature	
	Date	