PREAMBLE

The AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee (the “Committee”) is concerned with reviewing the ethical aspects of research projects, including ethical suitability and oversight as appropriate during the course of a project.

The CEO may consider and implement changes to the structure and operations of the Committee including dissolution, streamlining, re-configuration and establishment as deemed appropriate from time to time, provided that any changes do not compromise the capacity of the HREC to meet all relevant standards and procedures.

The quality of AIATSIS research projects in other respects is the responsibility of the AIATSIS CEO and Council.

1. THE COMMITTEE

(a) Membership

The CEO may appoint members of the Committee.

The Committee must be constituted by a minimum of nine members, comprising at least:

(a) a chairperson;

(b) a deputy chairperson;

(c) a lay man and a lay woman;

(d) at least one member with knowledge of, and current experience in, the professional care, counselling or treatment of people;

(e) at least one member who performs a pastoral care role or a person who performs a similar role in the community such as an Indigenous elder;

(f) at least one member who is a lawyer.

(g) at least two members with knowledge of, and current experience in, the areas of research that are regularly considered by the Committee; these two members may be selected, according to need, from an established pool of inducted members with relevant expertise.

Membership must include a majority Indigenous members and, as far as practicable, should reflect a gender and age balance. Members will not be appointed to more than one of the categories. It is intended to create a pool of members across each membership category to allow for sufficient representation from each category for every application review. The Committee may be assisted by such other persons as it considers appropriate. AIATSIS staff members are ineligible for membership of the Committee.

AIATSIS provides legal protection to all those involved in ethical review of research, for liabilities that may arise in the course of bona fide conduct of their duties in this capacity.

(b) Remuneration

Members of the Committee are entitled to payment of fees and reimbursement of expenses as determined from time to time by the CEO. Payments rates are set out below:

- Full day meeting: $462.00
• Half day meeting: $277.20 (60% of the full day sitting fees)
• Day and half meeting: $693.00
• Reading time recognition: $184.80. (40% of the sitting fees). This reading time will be paid to those members that are available to assess applications on the online platform even if they are not able to attend the meeting.
• Out of session review: $184.80 (sitting fees) + $92.40 (reading time): $277.2

(c) Documents

On their initial appointment and subsequently at meetings, members of the Committee, must be provided with copies of the AIATSIS: Induction Manual for Committee Members; Conflict of Interest policy; Information Privacy Principles; and the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies; as well as the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the NHMRC’s Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders and Keeping research on track II.

2. TERM OF OFFICE

(a) Appointments

Members normally serve for three year terms. Members may be reappointed by the CEO.

(b) Absences

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, the committee Chair may appoint another person to stand in for that member, for whatever number of meetings the committee Chair considers appropriate.

If the Chair is unable to attend the meeting, the responsibility will initially fall to the Deputy Chair. The Committee members present at a scheduled meeting may appoint an Acting Chairperson for the meeting in the event of the committee Chair and Deputy Chair being unavailable.

If a member misses more than two consecutive meetings without good reason, the AIATSIS CEO may decide to nominate a replacement for that member for the remainder of that Member’s term.

Members are generally expected to attend the whole of a scheduled meeting.

3. THE COMMITTEE’S WORK

The Committee may consider internal and external research proposals. There are fees associated with this service which are set by the CEO and listed on the AIATSIS website.

4. SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is responsible for overseeing the Research Ethics Committee. This includes:

• General ethics email enquiries
• Vetting and pre-assessment of ethics applications
• Meeting and travel logistics
5. MEETINGS

(a) Frequency of meetings

Meetings of the Committee will be held at least six times each year and additionally as required. Meetings dates and times to be set by the HREC at the end of each calendar year for the following 12 month period. The Committee may decide to hold meetings in Canberra, or by any convenient electronic / online medium.

Members unable to attend a meeting may submit their comments on any agenda item to the Chairperson before a meeting.

(b) Quorum

The quorum at each Committee meeting shall be 8 members, including at least one member from each of categories (a), (d), (e) and (f) and two members from categories (c) and (g) above, present either in person or via electronic/technical means. Where there is less than full attendance of the minimum membership at a meeting the Chair should be satisfied, before a decision is reached, that the views of those absent who belong to the minimum membership have been received and considered. Those absent that belong to the minimum membership will be provided with a copy of the meeting agenda and a set of the meeting papers.

The Committee may seek advice from experts to help in considering a research proposal. Such experts should be bound by the same confidentiality requirements as the review body members. Any conflicts of interest they may have should be disclosed and managed as outlined below.

(c) Preparation of agendas

The agenda for the meeting will be prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson and the Executive Director of Research. Members may submit notice of agenda items which they wish to have considered.

(d) Minutes

The proceedings of the Research Ethics Committee must be properly minuted. Minutes must be cleared by the Chairperson and a final version circulated to the committee.

Minutes must be available for presentation to the CEO or Council, on request.

(e) Conflict of interest

A member must not consider any matter in which that member has any conflict of interest as outlined in the AIATSIS Conflict of Interest policy, unless the Committee agrees otherwise. Where conflicts of interest exist, such conflict should be dealt with in accordance with the policy and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

(f) Distribution of papers

Papers will be circulated to members of the Committee at least ten days prior to meetings. The Chair may decide whether late papers can be considered at a meeting.
(g) Confidentiality of Committee proceedings

The Committee operates under the confidentiality provisions of the Australian Public Service (APS), including the APS Code of Conduct. All Committee proceedings are confidential. Information about discussions will be made available only to members of the Research Advisory Committee, CEO, Council and relevant AIATSIS staff members.

6. PROCEDURES:

(a) Review of research proposals

The Committee may invite researcher(s) to be present for discussion of their research proposals, and may request amendments to, or additional information in relation to, those proposals.

In the case of proposals where the Committee does not give unqualified approval, the Committee may decide a convenient process to deal with subsequent information received.

(b) Methods of decision making

Members of the Committee must endeavour to reach decisions by consensus. Decisions must take into account any comments provided by members not able to be present.

If the Committee is unable to reach consensus, decisions must be made by vote. The Chair has a deliberative and, if necessary, a casting vote.

(c) Types of Decisions

Approved: the application meets the expectation of the committee and the approval letter is sent.

Not approved: this decision must include a statement which links to the National Statement.

Approved with conditions: the application meets the basic requirements, but there are a few modifications that have to be made in order to give the approval, which will be checked by the secretariat or primary reader.

Resubmission: the application doesn’t meet the basic requirements; therefore the applicant needs to do a full resubmission to the entire committee.

(d) Prompt notification of decisions

Decisions made by the Committee on research proposals will be conveyed to the applicant(s) within 10 days of the committee meeting.

(e) Privacy

The Committee must satisfy itself that people carrying out research involving the collection, storage, interpretation, evaluation or other use of personal information are aware of, and compliant with, the Guidelines approved under Section 95 and 95A of the Privacy Act 1988 and the Information Privacy Principles to ensure that the privacy of persons to whom personal information relates is protected.

(f) Out of Session review of applications

The Chair will make a decision to allow the review of a research ethics clearance application out of session under special circumstances.
(g) Formal Approval of Ethics Clearance

The Chair will formally advise the Applicant of the committee’s decision to approve a Research Ethics Clearance Application by means of a signed form indicating the conditions of approval.

7. RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

(a) Monitoring and reporting after approval

Written reports detailing progress on research, maintenance and security of records, compliance with the approved protocols and compliance with any conditions of approval must be provided on a yearly basis, for assessment by the Executive Director of Research and Education and referral, if necessary, to the Committee.

(b) Reporting of adverse occurrences or research misconduct

Any adverse occurrences or breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research in an approved research project will be reported by the Executive Director of Research and Education to the Committee.

(c) Receiving complaints

All complaints will be dealt with, in the first instance, by the Executive Director of Research and Education, who will endeavour to resolve them in a timely and satisfactory manner. Should the complainant wish to take his or her complaint further, they will be advised to contact the AIATSIS CEO or the committee Chair. In the case that there is a conflict of interest between the complainant and Executive Director of Research the complaint will be elevated to the Deputy CEO.

The Executive Director of Research and Education will inform members of the Committee of any complaint received that is relevant to the ethical aspects of the research and all steps taken to address such complaint.

(d) Extensions of ethical approval for a project

The granting and extension of ethical approval for a research project must be on the condition that the researchers:

a. conduct the research in compliance with the approved protocol or project description;

b. provide reports of the progress of the project as required in the Committee’s guidance;

c. submit for approval any amendments to the project, including but not limited to amendments that:
   i. are proposed or undertaken in order to eliminate immediate risks to participants;
   ii. may increase the risks to participants; or
   iii. significantly affect the conduct of the research;

d. inform the review body as soon as possible of any new safety information from other published or unpublished research that may have an impact on the continued ethical
acceptability of the research or that may indicate the need for modification of the project;

(e) **Discontinuing a research project**

Where circumstances have arisen such that a research project is not being or cannot be conducted in accordance with the approved ethical protocols, the Executive Director of Research and Education may direct the researchers to suspend the project until ethics concerns have been adequately dealt with. The Director must draw the matter to the Committee’s attention, including subsequent actions and any sanctions.

_Last amended May 2019_