

National Mutual Acceptance (NMA)

Data Linkage Guide

OFFICIAL

The National Mutual Acceptance (NMA) scheme has been updated to include multi-jurisdiction data linkage projects.

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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 currently 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.

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 NSW, 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 [here](#).

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.

Researchers wishing to conduct research that ONLY requires access (and linkage) to state-wide data collections held by the NSW Ministry of Health or the Cancer Institute NSW are required to submit their application to the [NSW Population and Health Services Research Ethics Committee](#). Multi-jurisdictional data linkage studies may use any specialist NMA HRECs to access NSW Health datasets.

¹ E.g. research proposals involving Aboriginal participants.

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.

Specialist NMA Data Linkage HRECs

Jurisdiction	HREC	Contact details
QLD	Townsville Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00183)	TSV-Ethics-Committee@health.qld.gov.au Ph: (07) 4433 1440
	Metro South Hospital and Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee (EC0017)	MSH-Ethics@health.qld.gov.au Ph: (07) 3443 8049
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
	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

Jurisdiction	HREC	Contact details
	Royal Melbourne Hospital HREC (EC00243) St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) HREC (EC00343)	research@mh.org.au Ph: (03) 9342 8530 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 [Population Health Research Network](#) (PHRN) website.

Further Information

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

Jurisdictional Contact Details

Jurisdictional Contact Details	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	https://www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/	moh-researchethics@health.nsw.gov.au	(02) 9391 9220
Queensland	Research, Ethics and Governance Office of	www.health.qld.gov.au/ohmr/html/regu/regu_home	ORI_REG@health.qld.gov.au	(07) 3708 5071

Jurisdictional Contact Details	Office	Website	Email	Phone
	Research and Innovation			
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://www.clinicaltrialsandresearch.vic.gov.au	multisite.ethics@safere.vic.gov.au	0408 274 054
Western Australia	Research Development Unit	https://rgs.health.wa.gov.au	researchdevelopment@health.wa.gov.au	(08) 9222 6413
Tasmania	Clinical Quality Regulation and Accreditation	https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/research	research.governance@health.tas.gov.au	(03) 6166 0413
Northern Territory	Human Research Ethics Committee of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research	https://health.nt.gov.au/health-governance/department-of-health/committees-regulations-advisory-groups/human-research-ethics-committee	ethics@menzies.edu.au	(08) 8946 8687

To receive this document in another format, phone 0408 274 054, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email Coordinating Office for Clinical Trial Research <multisite.ethics@safere.vic.gov.au>](mailto:multisite.ethics@safere.vic.gov.au).

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