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| National Mutual Acceptance (NMA)  Data Linkage Guide |
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| 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](#_Specialist_NMA_Data). 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 apply[[1]](#footnote-1).

# Application Processes

## Research Ethics

The Human Research Ethics Application (HREA) form, available through the relevant [jurisdictional research management system](https://www.clinicaltrialsandresearch.vic.gov.au/national-mutual-acceptance) (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.

## 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](#_Further_Information) 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](#_Specialist_NMA_Data).

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](https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/research-and-data/nsw-population-health-services-research-ethics-com). Multi-jurisdictional data linkage studies may use any specialist NMA HRECs to access NSW Health datasets.

# 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)  Metro South Hospital and Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee (EC0017) | [TSV-Ethics-Committee@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:TSV-Ethics-Committee@health.qld.gov.au)  Ph: (07) 4433 1440  [MSH-Ethics@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:MSH-Ethics@health.qld.gov.au)  Ph: (07) 3443 8049 |
| NSW | NSW Population and Health Services HREC  (EC00410) | [CINSW-Ethics@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:CINSW-Ethics@health.nsw.gov.au)  Ph: (02) 8374 5689 |
| VIC | Alfred Health HREC (EC00315)  Austin Health HREC (EC00204)  Monash Health HREC (EC00382)  Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre HREC (EC00235)  Royal Children’s Hospital (Melbourne) HREC (EC00238)  Royal Melbourne Hospital HREC (EC00243)  St Vincent’s Hospital (Melbourne) HREC (EC00343) | [research@alfred.org.au](mailto:research@alfred.org.au)  Ph: (03) 9076 8825  [ethics@austin.org.au](mailto:ethics@austin.org.au)  Ph: (03) 9496 4070  [research@monashhealth.org](mailto:research@monashhealth.org)  Ph: (03) 9594 4611  [ethics@petermac.org](mailto:ethics@petermac.org)  Ph: (03) 8559 7542  [rch.ethics@rch.org.au](mailto:rch.ethics@rch.org.au)  Ph: (03) 9345 5044  [research@mh.org.au](mailto:research@mh.org.au)  Ph: (03) 9342 8530  [research.ethics@svhm.org.au](mailto:research.ethics@svhm.org.au)  Ph: (03) 9231 2394 |
| SA | SA Department for Health and Wellbeing HREC (EC00304) | [Health.humanresearchethicscommittee@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.humanresearchethicscommittee@sa.gov.au)  Ph: (08) 8226 7702 |
| ACT | ACT Health Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00100) | [ethics@act.gov.au](mailto: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](https://www.phrn.org.au/for-researchers/infrastructure/australian-data-linkage-units/) (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 |
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| Australian Capital Territory | Research Ethics and Governance Office | [www.health.act.gov.au/datapublications/research/humanresearch-ethics-committee](http://www.health.act.gov.au/datapublications/research/humanresearch-ethics-committee) | [ethics@act.gov.au](mailto: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](mailto:moh-researchethics@health.nsw.gov.au) | (02) 9391 9220 |
| Queensland | Research, Ethics and Governance Office of Research and Innovation | [www.health.qld.gov.au/ohmr/html/regu/regu\_home](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ohmr/html/regu/regu_home) | [ORI\_REG@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:hiiro_reg@health.qld.gov.au) | (07) 3708 5071 |
| South Australia | Office for Research | [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/researchethics](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/researchethics) | [Health.DHAResearch@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.DHAResearch@sa.gov.au) | (08) 8226 4235 |
| Victoria | Coordinating Office for Clinical Trial Research | <https://www.clinicaltrialsandresearch.vic.gov.au> | [multisite.ethics@safercare.vic.gov.au](mailto:multisite.ethics@safercare.vic.gov.au) | 0408 274 054 |
| Western Australia | Research Development Unit | <https://rgs.health.wa.gov.au> | [researchdevelopment@health.wa.gov.au](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:ethics@menzies.edu.au) | (08) 8946 8687 |

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| 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](mailto:multisite.ethics@safercare.vic.gov.au) <multisite.ethics@safercare.vic.gov.au>.  Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.  © State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Health, March 2024. |

1. E.g. research proposals involving Aboriginal participants. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)