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**Australian Academy of Science submission on Section 4: Ethical considerations specific to Participants in Research**

The Australian Academy of Science acknowledges the importance of the proposed revisions to Section 4 of the [National Statement](#) on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Specifically, the Academy:

- Supports revision of sections of the Statement in line with the national [strategic and health priorities](#) as issues emerge
- Welcomes additional guidance and clarification on vulnerable persons, emergency care settings, health emergencies and natural disasters
- Recommends the establishment of an oversight body to manage and oversee allegations of serious misconduct to safeguard research excellence in Australia.

Ethical considerations specific to participants in research, upholding the rights and well-being of individuals, are critically important to the practice of research. Ongoing revisions are essential to reflect the evolving landscape of research methods, emerging technologies, and societal values.

The Academy supports these proposed changes, except:

- The proposed amendment to paragraph 1.2 does not address the ambiguity of the current text. The existing text is considerably clearer and less open to misinterpretation.

While the addition of considerations of research on First Nations Peoples in Australia is welcome, further consideration should be given to centering the Australian National Statement on ethical concerns affecting the people to which they apply.

#### [Dealing with unethical behaviour](#)

Responsibility for the implementation of the national statement and research misconduct more broadly presently remains with institutions and research organisations – which by and large are within the university and medical research sector. Regulatory frameworks rely on the ethical conduct and practice of researchers and oversight by their employing institution.

This approach has weaknesses, as several high-profile cases have amply demonstrated recently.

The Academy has proposed elsewhere that an oversight body be established to reassure research stakeholders that any breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research are investigated when appropriate in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

While this is formally outside the remit of the review, it is about maintaining standards and ethics, not only in health and medical research. Accordingly, the Academy suggests that a recommendation to establish such a body should be made as a part of this work.

To discuss or clarify any aspect of this submission, please contact Mr Chris Anderson, Director Science Policy at [Chris.Anderson@science.org.au](mailto:Chris.Anderson@science.org.au).