

AMRRIC Research Policy

Date of Endorsement	21/05/2023
Endorsed by	Board of Directors
Last Review	N/A
Next Review Due	21/05/2025

1. PREFACE:

In the spirit of reconciliation, AMRRIC acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connections to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

AMRRIC's vision is to see healthy animals, healthy proud communities. Drawing from this, AMRRIC's Research Policy and Strategic Objectives (see [AMRRIC's Strategic Plan](#)) inform the development and implementation of research projects which promote advocacy for One Health-One Welfare principles and support appropriate outcomes in public health and safety for people and animals in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. AMRRIC recognises that ethical, respectful, and culturally sensitive research partnerships result in significant and tangible benefits for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their people and their companion animals. Additionally, AMRRIC recognises the benefits of the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as full partners in research projects. Such collaborations are a model that AMRRIC strongly supports, both within communities and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, institutions, and organisations.

In its work, AMRRIC seeks to base its policies and strategies on evidence-based and ethical research findings. AMRRIC is therefore interested in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers to assist in the development and implementation of projects that align with AMRRIC's strategy and objectives. As Australia's only independent organisation focusing on all areas of companion animal management in rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, AMRRIC is in a unique position to facilitate effective and appropriate research collaborations, with an emphasis on community-led research projects that promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and consultation.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of AMRRIC's Research Policy is to establish a framework for engaging in external research partnerships and collaborations and to outline AMRRIC's prospective role, research priorities, principles, and expectations.

This policy applies to AMRRIC's support and involvement in all research partnerships and collaborations.

3. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

1. To ensure all research that AMRRIC is involved with or supports:
 - a. has considerable benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their companion animals;
 - b. is developed and implemented in collaboration with local communities;
 - c. builds local capacity within the community;
 - d. aligns with AMRRIC's Strategic Objectives and supports advocacy for One Health principles;
 - e. is of the highest ethical standards;
 - f. is compliant with relevant legislation and guidelines;
 - g. is both culturally sensitive and humane;
2. To outline AMRRIC's expectations and role in regards to AMRRIC's involvement in, or support of research projects involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
3. To outline AMRRIC's research priorities.

4. AMRRIC'S RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

1. **One Health:** Collaborative, multi-disciplinary approaches, reflecting broad consultation with the community, relevant stakeholders, and service providers, that acknowledge and recognise the links between human, animal and environmental health and wellbeing and improve the capacity of One-Health knowledge frameworks.
2. **Cultural Understanding and Appreciation:** Understanding, appreciation and acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and traditional knowledges, and translation of cultural awareness into ethical, culturally, and contextually appropriate research practices.
3. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led and driven research projects that promote community-based participatory research practices and facilitate self-determination, leadership, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
 - a. For example, where the community contributes to all aspects of the proposed research, including research design, ownership of the data, data interpretation and publication of research findings, wherein professional researchers and institutions assist the community in research design and development and train them to carry out the research themselves or in partnership.
4. **Impact and Significance:** Research that drives sustainable improvements in animal health for the benefit of animals, people, and country and provides tangible outcomes to address priorities and objectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for their communities, their peoples, and their companion animals. Prioritisation of research projects that are of national significance and produce outcomes that can be applied in more than one jurisdiction or community.

5. **Knowledge Sharing and Translation:** Research that drives effective policy development and animal management practices in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, utilising culturally relevant and contextually appropriate strategies to inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, stakeholders and research partners of program and research outcomes.
6. **Ethics and Welfare:** Research that aspires to the highest ethical and welfare standards for both the humans and animals involved and demonstrates an awareness of culturally and contextually appropriate best practices in this regard.
7. **Collaboration and Mutual Benefit:** Research that draws on broad collaboration with communities, stakeholders and service partners and ensures respect, recognition and benefit for all parties involved.

5. AMRRIC's EXPECTATIONS FOR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

1. Relevant human ethics research committee and/or animal ethics committee approval is required for all research proposals, (including pilot programs and field trials), before the commencement of any research undertaken in partnership with AMRRIC.
2. Any research project that AMRRIC is involved with or supporting must conform to the principles articulated in the following guidelines and should aspire to the highest possible ethical standards:
 - a. [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#);
 - b. [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#)
 - c. [Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders](#).
3. Research projects involving human participants (including surveys and interviews) must comply with relevant legislation and the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).
4. Research projects involving animals must comply with the relevant legislation and the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#) and should aspire to the highest possible welfare standards.
5. The collection, use and storage of data relating to research projects should endeavor to comply with the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Data Principles](#).
6. Prior to commencement, all research projects require collaborative approval from the participating communities, primary investigators, governance of participating organisations (including AMRRIC) and any other stakeholders involved in the project.
7. Genuine informed consent from the community and individual participants that considers community preferences and understanding is an essential foundation of any research projects that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and must be incorporated into research design and methodology.
8. Research project design and execution should be culturally respectful and engage communities and community leaders in ongoing consultation – including providing culturally-relevant feedback on research outcomes.
9. In all interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, researchers must provide a culturally safe environment that is spiritually, socially, emotionally, and

physically safe for people and their animals; this includes identifying potentially adverse outcomes into the research design.

10. Research projects should include in their design and execution, effective strategies for the transfer of knowledge and information related to the research, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, relevant local health authorities, and other service providers, as well as AMRRIC, governments and other stakeholders.
11. Researchers must respect the intellectual property rights of researcher partners (including AMRRIC) and of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples involved, ensuring that culturally restricted or culturally sensitive information is protected from inappropriate use or publication. An intellectual property ownership agreement will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
12. Research copyright and ownership of research findings should be established with stakeholders (the community/people where and upon whom the research is being conducted, and the researchers/universities) prior to commencement of the research. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should retain the ultimate right to determine whether or not to approve results for publication.
13. Research must provide proper attribution and acknowledgement of all stakeholder contributors including AMRRIC and the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community. Drafts of any resource outputs must be approved by AMRRIC and participating communities prior to publication.
14. Research teams should seek to continually improve their cultural competency and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, values, knowledge systems and community processes, including through comprehension of AMRRIC's [Cultural Orientation Handbook](#).
15. Drawing from community-driven initiatives, specific research objectives should align with one or more of AMRRIC's research priorities.
16. AMRRIC endorses and commits to the 'no research without service' approach, ensuring that research findings translate to tangible and sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their companion animals.
17. Where applicable, AMRRIC is to be represented on the research governance/steering committee for the research projects it engages in.
18. All research engagements involving AMRRIC are expected to comply with AMRRIC's research policy as well as agreements outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding or similar documentation.
19. Potential breaches of research integrity and non-compliance will be handled in accordance with the NHMRC Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research ("the Code") and the NHMRC Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, as outlined in AMRRIC's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Management of Breaches in Research Conduct and Non-Compliance.

6. AMRRIC'S ROLE IN RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

1. AMRRIC may be involved with or support research projects to undertake ethical, capacity-building research on topics relevant to our Strategic Objectives. For example:

a. Knowledge Contribution

- i. mentoring and industry support, including introductions to appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and AMRRIC's network of One Health partners;
- ii. support and advise in project design and analysis, including consideration of feasibility and cultural appropriateness as well as the development of monitoring & evaluation indicators;
- iii. working with communities to identify research priority areas, and subsequently linking communities with professional researchers;
- iv. advising researchers on how to effectively translate research results into tangible benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- v. assistance with manuscript review and publication.

b. Data and Sample Collection

- i. on-ground support including data and sample collection on behalf of researchers;
- ii. facilitating sample collection through research team participation as volunteers on AMRRIC programs
- iii. providing researchers access to AMRRIC's app and program data;

c. Knowledge Transfer

- i. assisting with knowledge transfer and communication of research findings to communities involved and relevant stakeholders;
- ii. advocating relevant research findings that should inform policy.

2. In general, AMRRIC does not see itself as a major financial contributor to research but may provide in-kind support.
3. AMRRIC actively seeks to develop research collaborations with all relevant national and international organisations and individuals and avoids exclusive agreements with any one party.
4. Priority will be given to research projects that align with AMRRIC's Strategy and Objectives (see [AMRRIC's Strategic Plan](#)), particularly those projects with a One-Health focus, that facilitate community self-determination and have the potential to drive results with national applications.
5. AMRRIC approval of the research proforma is required for all research projects that AMRRIC supports.
6. AMRRIC's role in collaborative research engagements will be detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding with relevant research partners and collaborators.

7. AMRRIC'S RESEARCH PRIORITIES

1. AMRRIC prioritises research projects with One-Health significance that strengthens understanding of links between humans, animals and the environment, reflect community-identified priorities and are in line with AMRRIC Strategy and Objectives, with the following areas of focus, as they relate to companion animal health and management:
 - a. Improving health and welfare for humans and animals
 - b. Enhancing empathy, development and social welfare
 - c. Improving community amenity and safety

- d. Enhancing cultural connections
- e. Reducing the number of unwanted and neglected animals
- f. Reducing negative impacts on wildlife and ecosystems
- g. Reducing biosecurity risks/improving knowledge about emerging threats/diseases?
- h. Program evaluation and best practice (including transfer of knowledge and building local capacity)