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Policy Conflict of Interest with Membership of Animal Ethics Committee		

Introduction

A conflict of interest is defined as a situation in which an employee, a professional person or a public official has a private or personal interest that appears to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties.

This policy has been prepared to assist the AEC to recognise and nullify real or potential conflicts of interest associated with membership of the committee. This helps to fulfil the requirements that the AEC operates and is seen by the wider community to operate, with probity in accord with the provisions of the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8th Edition 2013*.

Policy

1. The Chairperson of the AEC will be a person who has administrative and/or supervisory responsibility at a senior level within the organisation.

The Chairperson will possess sound background knowledge of the type of work undertaken by researchers in the organisation.

The Chairperson's role is:

- to facilitate the conduct of AEC business in accord with the established operating procedures
- to ensure that the AEC operates fairly with respect to all interested parties and
- to enable all members to participate, thus ensuring a full and frank discussion of issues

Consequently, the Chairperson will not normally be an investigator on research protocols submitted for the consideration of the AEC.

If there is an occasional protocol submitted which names the Chairperson as an investigator, the Chairperson will nominate a member of the AEC to chair the discussions on the protocol and withdraw from the meeting while the AEC reaches its decision on the protocol.

2. CHM Alliance Pty Ltd undertakes to appoint members to the AEC who will not be involved in the care and use of research animals. If a member of the AEC is at any time an investigator on a research protocol they will withdraw from the AEC meeting while the protocol is being considered, to enable the AEC to make (and be seen to make) an independent decision on the protocol.

The member will also abstain from any monitoring activity on the protocol that is conducted by, or on behalf of, the AEC, apart from providing the committee or its delegates with such access and information as is required to enable the AEC to exercise its supervisory and monitoring functions.

Similarly, if a member manages an animal house or other research facility that is monitored and supervised by the AEC they will withdraw from the meeting while the AEC makes a decision in respect of any animals, records or other aspects relating specifically to those facilities or the member's management of them.

The member will also abstain from any monitoring activity of the facilities that is conducted by, or on behalf of, the AEC apart from providing the committee or its delegates with such access and information as is required to enable the AEC to exercise its supervisory and monitoring functions.

It is essential that the AEC operate with a quorum in accordance with the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8th Edition 2013*.

If category A or B members of the AEC are frequently named as investigators on protocols considered by the AEC, then additional members will be appointed to the committee in those categories. If a manager of a facility supervised by the AEC is frequently the only category A or B member of the committee in attendance, then a review of membership participation will be conducted and an additional member will be appointed in that category.

If additional members are appointed to the AEC, the balance of membership of the AEC will be maintained in accord with the requirements of the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8th Edition 2013*.

Where a member of the AEC (other than the Chairperson or Presiding Member) is named as an investigator on a research proposal, the member may provide the AEC with such information as is required to properly consider the proposal. However, there is a conflict of interest if the member then takes part in the decision making process of the AEC regarding the proposal.

Similarly, where a member of the AEC manages an animal house or research facility, it is appropriate for the member to provide the AEC with the information that the committee requires for the proper consideration of business related to the facility. However, there is a conflict of interest where the member then takes part in making decisions regarding aspects of the facility for which s/he has managerial responsibility.

Consequently, according to this policy the operating procedure is established whereby the member abstains from the decision making process by withdrawing from the meeting while the AEC reaches its decision. This will be recorded in the minutes of the AEC meeting when it occurs.

When the AEC monitors animals under a protocol, or inspects a facility, the member will not be involved in making, reporting or determining outcomes of any monitoring or inspection by or on behalf of the AEC, apart from providing such assistance as the AEC requires in properly conducting the activity.

The occasional withdrawal of a member from the AEC meeting will not be deemed to affect the validity of the decision if the absence of the member affects the maintenance of a quorum. However, if a member is the only person representing Category A or B and is frequently associated with research protocols or manages a facility supervised by the AEC, an additional person will be appointed to the committee in that category.