

# HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS – the Swinburne Context (Integrative)

- ❖ **a REGULATORY CONTEXT** (Changing/Evolving)
  - internal (Swinburne codes, policies and procedures)
  - external (laws, statutory guidelines, contracts)
    - Privacy Laws/Principles/research guidelines
    - Other Legislation (Surveillance Devices Act, etc)

## # Minimum Standards:

- *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)*
- *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*

## ❖ Swinburne CODES, POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Policy on the Conduct of Research
- Policies on Higher Degrees by Research
- Other Policies: OHS; Insurance; Quality Assurance: Etc
- Procedures, Timelines, Forms, Clearances, Reports

## ▪ Applicable Professional Codes of Practice

## ❖ ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

- Research Merit/Integrity & Researcher Integrity
  - Justifiable Good Research Design & Proper Conduct
  - Careful Record-keeping
  - Research leading to beneficial outcomes and publication
- Respect for Human Beings (autonomy, privacy, context, risk assessment, etc)
- Beneficence (or non-maleficence) (benefits outweigh any risk/no harm)
- Justice/Fairness (who benefits/pays/suffers/contributes/etc)

*Thinking carefully (ahead/throughout) about what you are doing, why you are doing it, how you are doing it – especially how it affects others during and after your research*

Given that “human research is conducted with or about people or their data or tissue”, **does your research activity require prior ethics clearance** (by or on behalf of Swinburne’s fully constituted Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) or a SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC))?

## Where to get help: Information, Communication & Dialogue

- Research/Research Ethics Website
- Research Bulletin
- Swinburne Research/Research Ethics Officer  
( <http://www.research.swinburne.edu.au/researchers/ethics/> )
- Academic Supervisor
- “Research & Ethics Advisors” (if your Faculty has them)

## CHANGING/EVOLVING CONTEXT:

- *Be alert for updates, revisions, deadlines, etc*
- *Society/communities/standards change*

**Ethics integral to academic & research planning/activity**

# Human Research Ethics at Swinburne

*Thinking carefully (ahead/throughout) about what you are doing, why you are doing it, how you are doing it – especially how it affects or impacts upon others during and after your research*

## *Common Problems with Human Research Ethics Applications*

- Missed check boxes and inappropriate answers to questions
- In using templates, applicants need to consider which options apply (e.g. 'side effects' clause often N/A)
- Spelling and grammar poor (spelling of "Principle" for "Principal" in particular)
- Inconsistencies between recruitment ads, consent information sheets/statements/letters, consent forms and the descriptions in the main body of the application/protocol.
- Incomplete information and/or contradictory information within or between sections – often clearly a direct result of copying and pasting between sections of earlier applications.
- Incomplete applications – not signed, sections missing or ignored by the applicant.
- Lack of clear or plain language in the application, especially consent instruments
- Lack of understanding of ethical and legal requirements (and/or an apparent lack of acceptance of these frameworks)
- Failure to identify and address or deal openly with relevant risk and ethical issues or dilemmas – ie a tendency to deny or try to avoid all risk instead of providing sufficient information to allow a proper demonstrative appraisal of the risks and benefits

### **Points to Note:**

- BREVITY – CLARITY – CONSISTENCY
- Explanation v Justification
- Assertion v Demonstration
- Relevant or Necessary for Research
- Confidentiality v Anonymity (for/to whom)
- Identifiability v non-identifiability v re-identifiability of information/data (nb Referring to De-identification is ambiguous, can mean rematching later.)
- Risk (to whom and why): negligible [mere inconvenience] v low [discomfort] v not low [possibility of harm/distress] – how so