



**INFORMATION PACKAGE
FOR MEMBERS OF
ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEES**

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Preface

ANZCCART is pleased to provide this information package for members of animal ethics committees (AECs). It is particularly important for new category C (animal welfare) and D (lay) members of AECs to be provided with background information about how ethics committees function, as well as what is expected of them as members. While some animal welfare organizations such as the RSPCA offer members who are about to join an AEC fairly extensive training, other groups are not able to offer such a service.

We would therefore suggest that the information presented in this package, should be seen as supplementary to any specific training you may have received or in the absence of such, a useful starting point that will hopefully assist you in taking your place as an effective member of an AEC.

Some people may find joining a committee that includes a number of scientific and technical experts a bit daunting. However, you should always remember that category C and D members play a vital role on every AEC, as they are there to represent the wider community and to help provide some level of public accountability for the AEC and its decisions. It has occasionally been suggested that scientific research can operate behind closed doors. This should not be accepted, as most scientific research and teaching in Australia is publicly funded and for this reason a line of accountability is essential. An AEC is accountable to the Chief Executive of its institution and must abide by relevant State and Territory legislation and the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*. It is therefore ultimately accountable through government to the general community.

Being a member of an AEC is an important and worthwhile role to play. It is sometimes difficult work and always involves a lot of reading and the assimilation of significant amounts of occasionally quite complex information. It is particularly important that all members of AECs understand how their committee functions and their part in this process.

We hope these notes help you in this task.

What is ANZCCART?

ANZCCART is the acronym by which the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching Ltd. is known. We were originally known as The Australian Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ACCART), which was established in May 1987 as a result of increased awareness within the research and teaching community of the distinctive issues that relate to the use of animals in these fields. We changed our name to ANZCCART on 1 January, 1993 following the decision by the Royal Society of New Zealand to accept the invitation of the Board of ACCART to join and to represent a consortium of New Zealand organisations. ANZCCART is now an independent organisation whose role is to encourage the ethical and humane use of animals in research and teaching by promotion of the principles of self-regulation as stated in the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* and as required under legislation in Australian States and Territories and in New Zealand. ANZCCART is a not - for - profit company incorporated in the ACT (ACN 063 383 522).

ANZCCART's mission is to foster and promote best practice in ethical, social and scientific issues relating to the use and wellbeing of animals in research and teaching.

To achieve its mission ANZCCART will promote:

- Excellence in the care of animals in research and teaching
- Responsible scientific use of animals
- The 3Rs policy of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement
- Informed discussion and debate within the community regarding these matters.
- Strategic partnerships to contribute to the education and training of scientists, students and the broader community to support the wellbeing of animals used in research and education.

ANZCCART seeks to achieve these objectives in a number of ways. Firstly by providing an ongoing focus on the social, ethical and scientific issues involved. Our second strategy involves providing a forum for discussion of these issues. We also facilitate access to relevant specialist advice and resources. In addition to this, through our publications and activities, ANZCCART is an on-going source of information for the general public about how animals are used in research and teaching in Australia and New Zealand. ANZCCART operates on a purely advisory basis and its membership represents the interests of government, funding organisations, research and teaching institutions, animal welfare groups, professional organisations and the community.

ANZCCART publishes a regular newsletter, *ANZCCART News*, which includes short review articles on matters of topical interest, resource material, book reviews and citations of recent publications, activities of government, including legislative developments, and national and overseas news items. *ANZCCART News* is provided *gratis* to member organisations, animal welfare societies and to other interested organisations and individuals. ANZCCART holds an annual conference and publishes the proceedings. It also publishes monographs relating to the use of animals in research and teaching and holds workshops and seminars that address areas of specific interest. ANZCCART provides expert information to the scientific and lay community, as well as to government. Its members sit on relevant State, Territory and National government committees. It liaises with an international network of similar organisations and is regarded internationally as a leader in this field.

1. Introduction

These guidelines have been compiled to help AEC members to understand the way in which the committee functions, and to ensure that their participation is worthwhile. They are intended to assist in promoting understanding of the issues affecting AECs and how to address these, to facilitate their effective operation in compliance with the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*. The AEC must ensure that all animal-based research and teaching within an institution is carried out in accordance with the relevant laws and institutional guidelines, and that it takes account of legitimate public concerns.

The use of animals for research or teaching is controversial in Western society. It is frequently the subject of media articles and of public demonstrations and arouses strong feelings in many people.

Information about the ways in which animals are used for scientific purposes is not readily available to the non-scientific community. While this is largely due to its technical nature, it does nothing to address the perception of a communication barrier between scientists and the general community. This misconception, which still exists in our society, may lead to mistrust or scepticism of scientists and their motives for animal-based research. This difficulty in communication is exacerbated by scientists not always being prepared or able to discuss their work in simple language to community groups such as schools and clubs, as well as by emotive and sometimes misleading media coverage.

The whole issue was discussed in detail by the Australian Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare, which published its findings in 1989. The resulting 290 page report provided a comprehensive coverage of the public debate in Australia on animal experimentation at that time. It includes chapters on the number of animals used, the moral status of animals and the ethics of animal experimentation, and on animal pain and distress. Detailed coverage is provided on how animals are used in research (biomedical, toxicological, psychological, agricultural and wildlife), on animal-house staffing, facilities and management, on the use of pound animals and on current and proposed future regulatory systems in the Australian States and Territories.

The Report concluded (p. 5) that “there is no doubt that the majority of the population supports biomedical research involving the use of animals, provided that effective controls are operating to keep the number of the animals and the level of pain and distress to a minimum. Until such time as the majority of Australians are persuaded that animal experimentation should not be carried out, and that is translated into legislative form, experimenters have a right to use animals within the regulations and guidelines imposed on such use by government and the scientific community”.

This debate continues today, with animal rights groups (represented by Animals Australia and others), as well as RSPCA Australia, either opposing, or not supporting, animal experimentation.

Opponents of animal experimentation generally cite ethical and moral beliefs, while supporters argue that the benefits to society (both human and animal) flowing from such use, outweigh the costs (ethical, moral and practical). This debate is frequently passionate and sometimes heated.

The public debate on animal experimentation in Australia dates from the early to mid-1970s, coinciding with the publication of Peter Singer’s book *Animal Liberation* in 1975.

The key to implementation of improved welfare for animals used for scientific purposes in Australia is the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (2004), endorsed by the NHMRC, CSIRO, ARC and the AV-CC. *The Code* is incorporated into the relevant legislation in all States and Territories and is used as the basis for animal care and use in research and teaching. *The Code* defines the functions and composition of AECs – which are clearly the linchpin of the humane animal use in research and teaching.

Animal experimentation (the use of animals for research purposes) is often confused by the public with animal testing (the use of animals to satisfy government regulations or assurances regarding human safety). The use of animals for testing cosmetics is a very controversial issue, although virtually no such testing is undertaken in Australia. Nevertheless, many cosmetics are now labelled ‘not tested on animals’ or ‘cruelty-free’ because of public concern for such testing. A well known example of animal use to test human medications and cosmetics is the Draize eye test in rabbits, which is no longer used in Australia.

Data on the number of animals used for research and the types of research undertaken in Australia each year is not yet readily available in all states and where it is available, does vary in the ways detailed information is published, which makes it difficult to do any direct or meaningful comparisons. This is an important issue, as public accountability requires access to this information. The total number of animals used annually for research purposes in Australia is approximately six million, but of these a very significant proportion are used in “observation only” studies or other such activities with minimal impact on the welfare of animals.

ANZCCART is working with the relevant organizations as well as State and Territory Governments to address the issue of consistency and accuracy of animal usage statistics across Australia.

2. *The Role of the AEC*

State and Territory laws and *the Code of Practice* require AECs to scrutinise both the scientific or educational value and the ethics of all proposals to use animals in research or teaching. They may:

approve only those studies for which animals are essential and justified and which conform to the requirements of the Code. This should take into consideration factors including ethics, the impact on the animal or animals and the anticipated scientific or educational value.

(Code 2.2.1. viii)

It can be extremely difficult for people outside a particular field to judge the scientific value of a project, but all members of the AEC will want to make an informed judgement. It is therefore essential that the AEC is provided with well written, clear and concise applications that avoids the use of technical jargon or terminology that cannot be reasonably understood by a reasonably intelligent, well – educated lay person. Obviously the makeup of each AEC includes qualified scientists, who may assist lay people see the issues raised by each application clearly and compare the aims and methods with the likelihood of a successful outcome on the one hand, and the probable value to humans or animals of such an outcome on the other.

The 3Rs

The use of animals for research purposes is now subject (via *the Code of Practice*) to implementation of the 3Rs, first introduced by Russell and Burch in 1959.

The 3Rs are defined as the Replacement of animals by other methodologies not requiring animals; Reduction in the numbers used; and Refinement of the techniques so that the animals are subjected to the least possible distress. For a detailed analysis of the 3Rs, see *the Code*, Section 1, and for their historical context see Monamy (1996), pp. 31-32.

The Code defines the role of AECs in the following way:

The primary responsibility of AECs is to ensure, on behalf of institutions, that all care and use of animals is conducted in compliance with the Code. AECs apply a set of principles, outlined in the Code, that govern the ethical conduct of people whose work involves the use of animals for scientific purposes. The role of the AEC is to ensure that the use of animals is justified, provides for the welfare of those animals and incorporates the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement.

(Code 2.2)

Alternatives

The availability and use of alternatives to animals in research and teaching is currently receiving a lot of attention internationally and there are now a number of organisations dedicated to the use of alternatives (e.g., Animals Australia, CAAT, FRAME, ECVAM). A glossary of these acronyms is found in Appendix 3.

AEC application forms should include a question asking whether a suitable alternative is available, which can replace or reduce the use of animals in this project. This is meant to be taken seriously by the applicant (and by the AEC).

The availability of Internet discussion groups such as that provided by ANZCCART, as well as a number from overseas (e.g., COMPMED from the USA – available to subscribers only (free) and may be accessed by sending an email request to COMPMED-request@LISTSERV.AALAS.ORG) also makes this information much easier to obtain. In the past it has been difficult to access information about alternatives, but this is now much more readily available, particularly through the database NORINA (Norwegian Inventory of Audiovisuals), which is available on the Internet at <http://oslovet.veths.no> (Note this website is based in Oslo, but also has an Australian mirror site).

The Code of Practice requires that applications to use animals must satisfy the AEC that animal use is essential and that no suitable alternatives exist.

The application form

There is as yet no standard Australia-wide application form, though *the Code* defines the information required from an applicant by an AEC (Code 2.2.16). Whatever form is used, a crucial section for AEC members is the *lay summary*. The intent behind *the code* here is quite clearly described as follows:

It is important that all AEC members are provided with sufficient information to participate in the assessment of the proposals. This can only be achieved by the use of plain English in the proposal. Applicants must ensure that where the use of scientific language is deemed unavoidable, it is supported by a suitable lay description or a glossary of terms

(Code 2.2.15)

If the lay summary is not completely clear to all members of the AEC it should be referred back to the investigator for rewriting before the protocol is discussed. New AEC members should ask to have the institution's application form explained to them before their first meeting.

AEC work takes time and commitment, which means that people who cannot get to the meetings regularly and do the preparatory reading should not join a committee.

Ethical issues

The ethics of animal experimentation is an area of which all AEC members need to have some knowledge, so that they can explain their own point of view, and appreciate the opinions of others.

There is a very clear and helpful overview of the debate on animal experimentation published by ANZCCART (Monamy, 1996). This short and very readable book also has an extensive bibliography for each chapter, so that the reader can follow up particular areas of interest and concern.

3. *Legislation and the Code of Practice*

The use of animals in research and teaching is controlled by Acts of State and Territory Parliaments in Australia, and by a national Act in New Zealand. A list of relevant Australian legislation is given in Appendix 2 of these Guidelines, along with web links to the relevant Act for your State or Territory.

The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes, (2004) is incorporated into the legislation in all States and Territories. It provides the most up to date information available, and adherence to its regulations is a condition for receipt of research funds from most funding bodies, including the National Health and Medical Research Council. A copy of *the Code of Practice* can be downloaded free of charge from the following web site:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ea16syn.htm>

Information about the relevant New Zealand Acts may be obtained from the ANZCCART New Zealand Web site at <http://www.rsnz.org/advisory/anzccart/>.

In addition to the Act and the *Code of Practice*, many institutions also have their own policy documents and practical guidelines devoted to the use of animals in research and teaching, and may also have administrative guidelines. Copies of all such documents should be provided to AEC members by their institution.

4. *Composition of the AEC*

In accordance with *the Code* (2.2.2 - 2.2.7), an AEC must comprise at least four persons, one from each of the following categories (for minor exceptions and further details see *the Code*):

Category A: Veterinary surgeon

Category B: Scientist with substantial recent experience in animal based research or teaching

Category C: Nominee of a recognised animal welfare agency

Category D: Layperson who has never engaged in animal experimentation

It is recommended, but is not mandatory, that a senior member of the animal house staff be a member of the AEC. This is incorporated in legislation in South Australia. Additional members can be appointed if necessary to ensure the effective functioning of the committee. If the AEC

has more than four members, the Category C and D members should together comprise no less than one third of the members.

All categories of members are equally valuable and valued. The knowledge, expertise and personal opinions of individual members will obviously vary considerably, but certain overlapping characteristics and abilities are desirable if the AEC is to function well as a group and the members are to find the work rewarding. These include:

- (i) an acceptance that ethical experiments on animals can be carried out as long as there is no viable alternative;
- (ii) courtesy and patience in dealing with other committee members and with investigators;
- (iii) willingness to listen as well as to speak; and
- (iv) clarity and succinctness in oral and written communication.

The duties of each category of member can be distinguished to a certain extent, but there is a large area of overlap. The AEC works as a group, so although some specific guidelines can be given to each category of member, it is helpful to have an appreciation of the guidelines offered to other categories as well as one's own.

Chairperson

Some AECs work well with an independent (Category D) Chairperson, others work equally well chaired by an investigator or teacher. *The Code* stipulates only that:

The Chairperson should hold a senior position in the institution, or, if an external appointee, be given a commitment by the institution to provide the necessary support and authority to carry out the role. It is recommended that the chairperson is an additional appointee to the category A – D members.

(Code 2.2.6)

Most AECs are chaired by a senior member of the institution who is readily available in an emergency, or for informal animal house inspections, discussions with investigators, administrative minutiae and so on. It is essential that the Chairperson be skilled in leading the groups of people to consensus decisions, and willing to devote time and energy to ensuring the smooth running of the AEC, liaison with other bodies, and last but not least, to the welfare of the animals.

It is part of the Chairperson's role to make sure that all applications to the AEC are clearly expressed and contain all the relevant information, so that discussion at meetings is well-focussed and a decision can be reached without the need for further consultation. *The Code* expressly forbids the taking of all but the most minor decisions out of session:

The AEC may establish an Executive which must include at least one external member from Categories C or D. The Executive may approve minor modifications to projects for review at the next AEC meeting but may not approve new projects.

(Code 2.2.11)

Category A: Veterinary Surgeon

Veterinarians are members of AECs because they have specialised knowledge of animals, and of advances in their care, treatment and general welfare. They are not appointed to represent the scientists' interests, although they inevitably have an informed appreciation of them. AECs rely very much on veterinarians for information on the variations between species in their reaction to procedures or drugs, on their housing needs and on their post-operative care. They can be particularly useful in helping the committee to assess the progress of a project or the impact of a specific procedure on the animals, by visiting an investigator and watching experiments.

It is preferable, but not essential, for the veterinarian to have had some previous experience with laboratory animals in a research environment.

The veterinarian is often asked to explain complex phenomena or justify unfamiliar treatments, always in lay terms. Unexpected questions are bound to be asked of veterinarians at almost every meeting. It sometimes helps the AEC to have written comments from a veterinarian. Information gleaned from veterinary journals with respect to individual species, drugs and husbandry is welcomed by AECs.

More detailed guidance can be obtained from the attached paper "The role of veterinarians on animal experimentation ethics committees", by Scott and Carter (1996), both of whom are veterinarians with AEC experience.

Category B: Scientist

The role of the scientist is to assess and if necessary help explain the merit of the application. Pitfalls with regard to animal welfare may also be particularly obvious to an investigator with current or recent experience of animal experimentation, as is the balance between benefit and cost of a given protocol. Most experienced scientists are required to assess the work or proposed work of other colleagues on a regular basis as a part of the normal peer review process undertaken by journals or funding bodies, so this is a role with which many scientists are familiar.

Category C: Animal Welfarist

Although it is not essential that this member be nominated by an animal welfare group, it is highly desirable, as explained in *the Code*:

..... as this will ensure both that the animal welfare credentials of the person are genuine and that the person will receive some measure of support from their nominating organisation.

(Code 2.2.2)

Animal welfare groups must select their nominee with care, rather than seizing gratefully on the first volunteer. It is not at all necessary that welfarists have a background in veterinary science or animal care, though this may be the case; but they do need a good knowledge of the general context of animal welfare today. They will want to consider animal experimentation not only on its own merits, but as part of the general picture of the ways in which our society considers it acceptable to treat animals. Although they can be expected to share the views of the organisation

nominating them, welfarists participate in AEC meetings as members of the AEC, not as representatives of an animal welfare organisation. So, if they are members of an anti-vivisection society it is not their role to oppose every application on philosophical grounds, but to ensure that if a protocol is accepted the animals are well cared for and there are no unethical procedures.

Category C members should not be employed by or otherwise associated with the institution and should have no direct involvement with the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

The guidelines offered below for lay members of AECs are equally appropriate for welfarists who may not have much committee experience behind them, or who may not see themselves as well-versed in science.

Category D: Lay Member

Lay members of AECs are selected to represent the general community and are independent of the Institution:

A category D member should be seen by the wider community as a person who is both independent of the institution and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, either in their employment or beyond their under-graduate education. Category D members should be viewed by the wider community as bringing a completely independent view to the AEC, and must not fit the requirements of any other Category.

(Code 2.2.2)

Before accepting an invitation to join a committee, the layperson should ask themselves the following questions:

- (i) Am I sure that I have enough time and interest to read lengthy applications and do any necessary background reading?
- (ii) Am I prepared to ask straight-forward questions of highly qualified veterinarians and scientists, and persevere until a complete answer is given?
- (iii) Am I prepared to speak my mind in meetings?
- (iv) Do I feel confident that I can work with that particular committee?
- (v) Am I accepting this invitation for a negative reason? Usually this would be a plea that they cannot find anyone else, or perhaps that the gender balance on the AEC is unsatisfactory. No one has a moral obligation to join a committee for such reasons.

If the prospective member can answer questions (i) to (iv) in the affirmative, then serving on an AEC will be very rewarding. Once on the AEC, a lay member who has difficulty understanding an application should contact the Chairperson, who will be able either to clarify it, or to consult the investigator. Usually, if one committee member has difficulty following an application, so do others, not least the Chairperson, who often lacks a scientific background and may already be trying to sort out obscurities. Lay members should also realise that category A and category B members will not always be able to understand all details in every application either and may well benefit from the questions you ask.

A prospective lay member should have the opportunity before agreeing to join an AEC to discuss the work with the Chairperson, to meet other members, and to tour the animal facilities. Institutions may invite a lay person to attend a meeting before becoming a member.

The NHMRC Animal Welfare Committee has published an information brochure for Category D Members on Animal Ethics Committees.

Animal Care Attendants

Animal care attendants bring to the AEC an unrivalled knowledge of the institution's animals, their housing and care, the ways in which they are used in experiments or teaching, and the requirements of the various investigators.

Through their networks (e.g., ANZLAA and personal) they have access to valuable information on what is happening elsewhere, and can be of enormous assistance to investigators and to the AEC. These staff members can also play a most important role in assisting with the monitoring of work done in their facilities and ensuring it is done to the standards required by your AEC.

It is usually preferred that a senior member of the animal house staff be on the AEC, as they can speak and act with more authority than a junior. This category of membership is strongly recommended but not mandated by *the Code of Practice*, although it is required by law in South Australia.

5. *How the AEC Functions*

The Code deals with the details of the way in which the AEC should function (Section 2, especially 2.2.10 - 2.2.48).

The following discussion covers points that may be of particular interest to AEC members.

Accountability

The AEC is accountable to the Head of the institution (for example, to the Vice-Chancellor in a university), and through that person to the community at large, usually via a State Minister.

Protocol appraisal

It is essential that all members of the AEC understand what is being proposed by the applicant. This requires a clear lay summary comprehensible to a person without a scientific background. If this is not provided, the AEC Secretary should discuss the application with the Chairman before the meeting and, if necessary, ask for it to be rewritten before circulation to AEC members.

The protocol should state clearly what is intended to be done and why. It should include details of the number, sex, species and breed of animals requested and this information should be statistically justified. This may require attachment of an experimental plan, as well as statistical validation of the plan and of the number of animals required.

The AEC should appraise the application with regard to the 3Rs of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (as required by *the Code of Practice*). It should also evaluate the animal husbandry and housing, as well as the experience of the scientific and technical staff involved.

Any potential for animal pain or distress must be clearly stated and the proposed analgesic regimen that will be employed to prevent such pain should be explained. Where pain cannot be prevented or adequately treated, the AEC must consider how pain will be monitored and what end points will be allowed before it must be alleviated. This includes appropriateness of the method of euthanasia (if required) and the competence of the staff to perform it humanely.

It is often worthwhile to invite the investigator submitting a protocol, which is complex or where animal pain is involved, to address the AEC and answer questions. This is helpful to both parties and often results in improvements to the experimental design and to better animal welfare.

Decision-making

The Code gives the following advice:

Decisions by the AEC with regard to approval, modification or rejection of a proposal, or withdrawal of approval for a project, should be made on the basis of consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after a reasonable effort to resolve differences, the AEC should explore with the applicant(s) ways of modifying the project that may lead to consensus. If consensus is still unachievable, the AEC should only proceed to a majority decision after members have been allowed a period of time to review their positions, followed by further discussion.

(Code 2.2.22)

Consensus seems to be the most widely-used method, but as is clear from the above extract from *the Code*, there is no agreement as to what should be done if there is profound disagreement within the committee. This is a subject which individual AECs should discuss frankly. There have been interesting and provocative papers on this issue by Brennan (1996) and Hassall (1999).

Administrative support

This should not be a worry to members apart from the Chairperson; but if an AEC is not adequately serviced by the institution it cannot do the job given to it by law, and members should refuse to put up with substandard administrative support. The agenda should be distributed early enough to give busy people time to study it properly. Some AECs stipulate ten days for the bulk of the papers, with a few items arriving four or five days before the meeting. It is not fair to AEC members for applications to be tabled at a meeting, and some AECs do not allow it.

Site inspections

It is normal practice, and indeed is required by *the Code* (2.2.29 – 2.2.33), for AECs to make regular formal inspections of animal facilities. In addition, in some institutions arrangements are made from time to time for the committee to be given talks and demonstrations by investigators in meetings or in their laboratories.

Site inspections may be announced in advance, so that relevant members of staff can be present; or unannounced, so that the AEC can see the facility in action on an ordinary day.

There should be at least one formal, announced site visit to each site every year, and it can be useful to invite other members of the institution or the community to attend. However, it is often undesirable to have too many people visiting a facility at the same time, because of the disturbance to the animals.

AEC members should avail themselves of all opportunities to visit animal houses and should not hesitate to make further, informal visits. Courtesy dictates that such visits by one or two members be cleared with the Chairperson or other responsible officer, and take place at a time when the supervisor of the animal facilities can arrange for them to be accompanied. The Chairperson will be in the habit of making unannounced visits, and should be contacted if that is the sort of visit an AEC member wishes to make. Animal houses are not secretive places, but some animals are in quarantine, others dislike the arrival of a stranger, others again may need absolute quiet at certain times.

Confidentiality

There is no written, Australia-wide rule about confidentiality as it concerns animal experiments. It has been quite widely assumed that members of AECs, like members of any committee dealing with individuals' research projects, do not discuss the work of the AEC with anyone; and some institutions ask members to sign a confidentiality agreement. However, members who feel they need to consult a colleague who has more specialised knowledge about something should be free to do so in confidence, provided that such discussions would not breach a signed confidentiality agreement they have with the institution. If such an agreement or any other similar barrier is in place, AEC members should feel free to raise questions or concerns with the AEC chair, who may be in a position to grant limited licence for the member to seek advice outside the committee.

Members should be aware of the institution's requirements and expectations before they join the committee, and if they are permitted to consult an outside person they should ensure that the person knows the question is confidential. When in doubt, it should be assumed that confidentiality must be rigorously maintained. The Chairperson of your AEC should be able to help.

The Code makes the AEC and the institution responsible for establishing how advice may be sought without breaching confidentiality:

Before appointment, all members of the AEC should acknowledge in writing their acceptance of the terms of reference of the committee and any requirements for confidentiality required by the institution. The committee should reach agreement on how advice may be sought without breaching confidentiality.

(Code 2.2.8)

Grievances

Each institution should have an appropriate channel by which complaints and concerns can reach the governing body (Code 2.2.14). If the Chairperson is not involved in a complaint, then they are the obvious person to consult. It is desirable that conflicts be handled within the institution

wherever possible, perhaps utilising a person experienced in conflict resolution. Where a State Minister appoints or formally approves membership of the AEC, complaints which cannot be resolved within the institution should be addressed to them.

The relationship between the scientist and the AEC

As is stated clearly by *the Code*, the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of experimental animals lies with the researcher or teacher:

Investigators and teachers have personal responsibility for all matters related to the welfare of the animals they use and must act in accordance with all requirements of the Code. This responsibility begins when an animal is allocated to a project and ends with its fate at the completion of the project.

(Code 3.1.1 - 3.1.2)

Two sections of *the Code* (Sections 3 and 6) are largely devoted to that responsibility. It is helpful if AEC members, particularly those who are not familiar with the institution's scientific community, can be brought into contact with scientists. For example, it can be very fruitful for all concerned if an investigator is asked to appear at a meeting of the committee to clarify certain points or answer questions. Visits to animal facilities and especially to laboratories (see above) may also result in useful dialogues.

This issue is covered in the linked article by Rose (1996).

6. Institutional Guidelines

Some institutions have a handbook of operating procedures or guidelines for researchers, teachers and technical staff in working with experimental animals. This is very useful and provides a reference for AEC members as well as for researchers and teachers.

Standard Operating Procedures for which a protocol can be provided by the institution include:

- Anaesthesia techniques;
- the use of adjuvants;
- production of monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies;
- standards of laboratory animal housing;
- methods of collecting blood samples from various species of animals; and
- post-operative analgesia, including dose-rates of drugs and routes and frequency of administration.

7. Other Useful Guidelines and Policies

There are a number of organisations with an interest in this area which have produced relevant fact sheets, guidelines, codes of practice or monographs. These include:

- ANZCCART
- Animal Welfare Office of NSW Agriculture
- DAFF
- NHMRC Animal Welfare Committee

- Animals Australia
- Animal Welfare Committee of SCARM

A list of addresses is found in the appendices, together with a bibliography of useful references.

8. Monitoring

Institutions and Animal Ethics Committees

The 7th edition of the *Australian Code of Practice for the care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (2004) recommends institutions arrange a formal external review of their AEC at least every 3 years (2.1.2 and appendix 1). Such a review should be designed to cover all aspects of animal use within the institution and the operation of their AEC(s). A number of relevant State Government Departments also require regular review of the operation of every AEC in their region and all institutions to which they have issued a licence.

Protocols

This has always been a very important issue, which must be addressed by the AEC. Once an animal has been issued to a project, the responsible Investigator or Teacher must assume ultimate responsibility for the day – to – day monitoring of its well being. This is overseen by the AEC as a part of their regular inspection of animal housing and laboratories. (Code 2.2.26 – 2.2.36)

The Animal Welfare Committee of the NHMRC has for some years monitored protocols submitted by researchers receiving NHMRC funding and has conducted site inspections. This does not include projects receiving funding from other sources such as the ARC or industry.

Procedures

Monitoring of procedures is the responsibility of the institutional AEC and is often delegated to the Animal Welfare Officer (usually a veterinarian), or to the Animal House Manager.

It is recommended that AECs regularly inspect the animal house in their institution and meet the research workers in their laboratories. This provides the opportunity for interaction and for a better understanding by each party of the other's position.

Assessing competence of individuals to perform procedures

This can be gleaned from an interview with the investigator, from peer review, e.g., from other investigators or from the Animal Welfare Officer and the technical staff. Many larger organisations now hold an annual training course for honours and postgraduate students, as well as for new research workers. This includes lectures on the ethics of animal experimentation, legislation and *the Code of Practice*, the responsibilities of investigators (e.g., to implement the 3Rs) and on obtaining basic technical skills, such as handling animals and taking blood samples.

New members of AECs should attend such courses, as they provide a good overview of the issues, as well as the difficulties faced by all involved.

9. Conclusion

The authors of these Guidelines, who come from all membership categories, have found membership of an AEC a very rewarding and instructive experience, albeit one which took more time and energy than they had initially expected. All have found that there is great personal satisfaction to be gained from participating in a worthwhile activity where advances can be made on all fronts.

Appendix 1

Bibliography and Further Reading

The following provide useful background for members of AECs, particularly members in categories C and D. All are available from ANZCCART's Adelaide office.

Australian Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare (1989). *Animal Experimentation*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

<http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/Science/astec/ethics/contents.html>

[ANZCCART News 8\(3\). September, 1995. Special Issue for Schools on the Use of Animals in Education.](#)

[Brennan, A. \(1996\). Australian AEECs: some proposals for effectiveness. ANZCCART News 9\(2\): 1-3.](#)

[Campbell, A. \(1995\). The animal rights debate. ANZCCART News 8\(1\): 1-3.](#)

[Einstein, R. \(1997\). The value of animal ethics committees. ANZCCART News 10\(1\): 3-5.](#)

[Hassall, G \(1999\) Committees and conflict resolution. ANZCCART News 12\(1\) 1-3.](#)

[Johnson, K. \(1996\). Making ethical decisions when the balance keeps swinging. ANZCCART News 9\(3\): 9-10.](#)

ANZCCART Fact Sheet: [Pain-assessment, alleviation and avoidance in laboratory animals](#) by Paul Flecknell. This fact sheet can be accessed directly at the following address:

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/publications/Pain%20Assessment_9.pdf

[Mellor, D. \(1993\). Animals in science: ethics, obligations and ANZCCART. ANZCCART News 6\(1\): 1-3.](#)

[Monamy, V. \(1996\). Animal Experimentation: A Student Guide to Balancing the Issues. ANZCCART, Adelaide.](#)

Morton, D.B. and Griffiths, P.H.M. (1985). Guidelines on the recognition of pain, distress and discomfort in experimental animals and an hypothesis for assessment. *The Veterinary Record*. April 20, 1985. pp. 431-436. Article may be accessed on line via the following address:

<http://veterinaryrecord.bvapublications.com/content/vol116/issue16/index.dtl>

[Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. 7th Edition. Australian Government – National Health and Medical Research Council, Canberra.](#)

NHMRC Animal Welfare Committee Publishes Information for AECs which includes a number of important Guidelines Documents and an occasional AEC Newsletter.

These are available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/ethics/animal/issues/index.htm>

NHMRC Animal Welfare Committee: Brochure for Category D Members on Animal Ethics Committees. (Available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/ethics/animal/issues/_files/ea10.pdf)

[Oogjes, G. \(1996\). The need for change. ANZCCART News 9\(3\): 4-5.](#)

Perry, M. (1997). Review of the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*. ANZCCART News 10(1): 1-2. This edition of ANZCCART News can be accessed at: http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/news/1997_10_1.pdf

[Rogers, L. \(1994\). What do animals think and feel? ANZCCART News 7\(4\): 1-3.](#)

[Rose, M. \(1992\). Russell and Burch revisited. ACCART News 5\(4\): 1-2, 6-7.](#)

[Rose, M. \(1996\). Striking the balance: the practitioner and the AEC. ANZCCART News 9\(3\):1-4.](#)

[Rose, M.A. \(1996\). The problems of pain: concepts and issues. ANZCCART News 9\(4\): 2-4.](#)

Russell, W.M.S and Burch, R.L. (1959). *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*. Reprinted edition (1992). UFAW, London. <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/highlights.php>

Please note that this book is now available on line for anyone to read or down load free of charge. It can be found at: http://altweb.jhsph.edu/publications/humane_exp/het-toc.htm

Scott, L.R. and Carter, P.D. (1996). The role of veterinarians on animal experimentation ethics committees. *Australian Veterinary Journal* 74(4): 309-310. May be accessed at the following address: <http://www.ava.com.au/avj/oct96/304.htm#role>

Singer, P. (1990). *Animal Liberation*. New York Review of Books. Second edition. New York.

Journals

- Animal Welfare
- Anthrozoos
- ATLA (Alternatives to Laboratory Animals)
- ILAR Journal
- Lab Animal
- Laboratory Animals

Newsletters

- ANZCCART News
- ANZLAA Newsletter
- Animal Welfare Information Center of the US National Agricultural Library
- CAAT (Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing), USA
- Canadian Council on Animal Care *Resource*
- *Ethics Committee News*, from the Animal Welfare Information Network (ANZFAS)
- FRAME (Fund for Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments), UK
- NHMRC Animal Welfare Committee
- NSW Agriculture Animal Ethics Update

- Research Defence Society, UK
- SCAW (Scientists' Center for Animal Welfare), USA
- UFAW (Universities Federation for Animal Welfare), UK

ANZCCART Publications

- *Animal Pain: Ethical and Scientific Perspectives.* (eds T Kuchel, MA Rose and J Burrell). Proceedings of the conference held in the Barossa Valley, SA, 1992. ISBN 0 643 05383 2.
- *Survey of Laboratory Animals and Tumour Cell Lines Maintained in Australia and New Zealand* (ed. RM Baker) 8th Edition. 1997. ISBN 0 646 12728 4.
- *Euthanasia of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes.* 1993. (ed. J Reilly) 1993. ISBN 0646 11803 X.
- *Effective Animal Experimentation Ethics Committees.* 1994. (eds. RM Baker, JH Burrell and MA Rose) Proceedings of the conference held at the University of Adelaide, Australia, October, 1992. ISBN 0 646 15418 4.
- *Animal Welfare in the Twenty-first Century: ethical, educational and scientific challenges* 1994. (eds. RM Baker, DJ Mellor and AM Nicol). Proceedings of the conference held in Christchurch, New Zealand, April, 1994. ISBN 0 9590540 6 5.
- ANZCCART Public Lecture *Banting's Dog and Schrodinger's Cat: Animals and Experiments* (C Puplick) 1994. ISBN 0646 206 788.
- *Animals and Science in the Twenty-first Century: new technologies and challenges.* 1994. (eds. RM Baker, R Einstein, DJ Mellor and MA Rose). Proceedings of the conference held Melbourne, October, 1994. ISBN 0 646 22484 0.
- *Farm Animals in Biomedical and Agricultural Research.* 1996. (eds. RM Baker, R, Einstein, DJ Mellor). Proceedings of the conference held Wellington, New Zealand, August, 1995 ISBN 0 646 26379X.
- *Animal Experimentation: A Student Guide to Balancing the Issues* (V Monamy) 1996. ISBN 0 9586821 0 0.
- *Animals in Education: Value, Responsibilities and Questions.* 1997. (eds. A Brennan and R Einstein). Proceedings of the conference held in Canberra, 1996. ISBN 0 9586821 1 9.
- Annual Reports from 1993.

In addition, ANZCCART's Adelaide office also holds stocks of current publications from the Scientists' Center for Animal Welfare (USA) and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UK). A list of publications is available on request.

NHMRC occasional reports and policies*

- *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*
- *A Guide to the Use of Australian Native Mammals in Biomedical Research*, Sections 1-3
- *A Guide to the Use of Australian Native Mammals in Biomedical Research*, Section 4
- *Ways of Minimising Pain and Distress in Animals in Research*
- *Strategies for Minimising the Numbers of Animals Used in Research Projects*
- *Australian Animal Experimentation Ethics Committees, 1987 - 1989. Protection for Animals in Biomedical Research.*
- *NHMRC Policy on the Care of Dogs for Medical Research*
- *NHMRC Policy on Non-human Primates in Medical Research*
- Available from the Animal Welfare Committee of the NHMRC, GPO Box 1421
- Canberra ACT 2601. Tel. (02) 6289 6948; fax: (02) 6289 6957.

Appendix 2

Animal Welfare Legislation and Administration in Australia and New Zealand

AUSTRALIA

Queensland

Animal Research Act 1985

Animal Research Regulations 1995

Available on-line at:

<http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/A/AnimalCaPrA01.pdf>

http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/A/AnimalCaPrR02_01C_030302.pdf

New South Wales

Animal Research Act 1985

* Animal Research Regulations 1995

Available on-line at:

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/scanact/inforce/NONE/0>

and then click on the appropriate link.

*NB Under review with Animal Research Regulations 2005 currently being circulated for comment.

ACT

Animal Welfare Act 1992 (Refer particularly to Part 4 “Research, Teaching and Breeding”)

Available on-line at:

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/awa1992128/

Victoria

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (Refer particularly to Part 3 “Scientific Procedures”)

Available on-line at:

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/disp.pl/au/legis/vic/consol%5fact/poactaa1986360/?query=title+%28+%22animal%22+%29>

Tasmania

Animal Welfare Act 1993 (Refer particularly to Part 4 “Animal Research”)

Available on-line at:

http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au/tocview/index.w3p;cond=;doc_id=63%2B%2B1993%2BAT%40EN%2B20050815160000;hison=;prompt=;rec=;term=

NT

Animal Welfare Act 2004

Available on-line at:

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nt/consol_act/awa128/

South Australia

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985 (Currently under Review)

Available on-line at:

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/disp.pl/au/legis/sa/consol%5fact/poctaa1985360/?query=title+%28+%22animal%22+%29>

Western Australia

Animal Welfare Act 2002

Available on-line at:

<http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/statutes/swans.nsf/PDFbyName/A8DFAFE74D3AF88F48256CFE0004362E?OpenDocument>

NEW ZEALAND

Please refer to the ANZCCART New Zealand Web site for further information on local legislation.

This may be accessed via the main ANZCCART website at www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/ or directly at: <http://www.rsnz.org/advisory/anzccart/>

Appendix 3

List of Acronyms Commonly Encountered

AAC	Australian Agricultural Council
ATSE	Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
AEC	Animal Ethics Committee
NZAAHCP	New Zealand Association for Animal Health and Crop Protection
AHA	Animal Health Alliance (Australia) Ltd
AMRIC	Animals in Medicines Research: Information Centre
ANZCCART	Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching
ANZLAA	Australian and New Zealand Laboratory Animal Association
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARRP	Animal Research Review Panel (NSW)
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association
AVAWE	Australian Veterinarians Associated Welfare and Ethics (Special Interest Group)
AV-CC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (Now Universities Australia)
AWAC	Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
AWC	Animal Welfare Committee
BVA	British Veterinary Association
CAAT	Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (USA)
CCAC	Canadian Council on Animal Care
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
ECVAM	European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods
FRAME	Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (USA, Canada)
ICLAS	International Council for Laboratory Animal Science
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (New Zealand)
NCCAW	National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (Australia)
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council

NZVA	New Zealand Veterinary Association
RNZSPCA	Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SCAW	Scientists' Center for Animal Welfare (USA)
SSCAW	Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare (Australia)
UA	Universities Australia (Formally known as the AV-CC)
UFAW	Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UK)

Appendix 4

Sources of Additional Information

- *NHMRC Policies* and *NHMRC Newsletter*, from the Animal Welfare Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council. The Animal Welfare Committee has produced a number of documents, mostly related to the use of specific species in biomedical research. It publishes a yearly newsletter. Address: AWC Secretary, NHMRC, GPO Box 1421, Canberra ACT 2601 (phone: (02) 6289 9179; email: Research@nhmrc.gov.au).

See also the relevant section of the NHMRC Website at:

www.nhmrc.gov.au/ethics/animal/issues/index.htm

Scroll down towards the bottom of the page and click on the links provided under the heading “Information for AEC (Animal Ethics Committees)”.

- *ANZCCART News*, from the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching. ANZCCART also publishes monographs, conducts workshops and conferences and publishes proceedings from these conferences. Address: ANZCCART, C/- The University of Adelaide, South Australia, 5005. (phone: 8303 7585; fax: (08) 8303 7587).
- *ANZLAA Newsletter*, from the Australian and New Zealand Laboratory Animal Association. Address: C/- Dr Malcolm France, Laboratory Animal Services, University of Sydney, NSW 2006 (phone: (02) 9351 3603; fax: (02) 9351 4950, email: M.France@las.usyd.edu.au).
- Australian Veterinarians Associated with Scientific Establishments (AVAWE), a special interest group of the Australian Veterinary Association. Address: AVA National Office, Unit 40, 2A Herbert Street, St Leonards, NSW, 2065 (phone (02) 9431 5000; fax: (02) 9437 9068).
- Bureau of Animal Welfare, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 475 Mickleham Rd, Attwood, 3049. (phone: (03) 9417 4200; fax (03) 9217 4331, email: Animal.Welfare@dpi.vic.gov.au).
- Animal Welfare Unit, NSW Agriculture. Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800 (phone: (02) 6391 3682; fax: (02) 6391 3570, email: animal.welfare@agric.nsw.gov.au).
- ALTWEB NEWS aims to be a global clearing house for information on alternatives to animal testing and is published by the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and CAAT at <http://altweb.jhsph.edu>