

GHD Animal Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures

Introduction

The GHD Animal Ethics Committee (GHD AEC) Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures have been prepared in accordance with Section 2 of the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes, 8th Edition 2013 (hereafter referred to as the Code). GHD, as an institution conducting animal research, must ensure, through the operation of an GHD AEC, that all activities involving the care and use of animals used for scientific purposes complies with the Code. For this reason, GHD has established its own GHD AEC. The GHD AEC is accountable to the Australian Leadership Team.

The purpose of the Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures is to provide guidance to the GHD AEC on the assessment and approval of projects involving the use of live non-human vertebrate animals, cephalopods, and large Crustacea (Decapods and Malacrustacea) for scientific purposes.

The primary responsibility of the GHD AEC is to ensure, on behalf of GHD, that all activities relating to the care and use of animals are conducted in compliance with the Code.

The majority of the environmental work undertaken by GHD is environmental studies/assessment. This includes activities such as fauna survey and monitoring, which are regarded as research under relevant State/Territory legislation and the Code. The term 'scientific purposes' used in this document includes all animals encountered during these activities.

The GHD AEC will operate in accordance with the governing principles of the Code whereby respect for animals must underpin all decisions and actions involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (Clause 1.1 of the Code). This respect is demonstrated by:

- a) using animals only when it is justified
- b) supporting the wellbeing of the animals involved
- c) avoiding or minimising harm, including pain and distress, to those animals
- d) applying high standards of scientific integrity
- e) applying Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) at all stages of animal care and use:
 - i) the *Replacement* of animals with other methods
 - ii) the *Reduction* in the number of animals used

- iii) the *Refinement* of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on animals
- f) knowing and accepting one's responsibilities.

1. Definitions

GHD AEC Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) – detail the methodology and ethical considerations of standard field survey techniques pre-approved by the Institution and used during ecological assessments.

Approved researcher – an Associate Investigator qualified to undertake and lead fauna surveys unsupervised, or an Assistant to an Associate Investigator which cannot conduct surveys without supervision.

Business Group Leader – responsible for company performance and people management regarding a specific discipline or series of disciplines such as natural resource management.

Chair – a Technical Director appointed by the nominated representative of the Australian Leadership Team. The Chair of the GHD AEC works collaboratively with the Australian Natural Resources and Aquatic Sciences Service Line Leaders and reports directly to the nominated representative of the Australian Leadership Team. The Chair is independent of the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Institution or administering authority – refers to GHD and is responsible for providing support (finance, policies, procedures), administration and governance for operation of the GHD AEC.

Internal animal ethics sub-group – delegates responsible for assisting the GHD AEC in the distribution of information throughout the Institution and the collection of data for monitoring and auditing of projects. Composed of authorised members of the Institution selected for their breadth of knowledge in ecological fauna assessments.

Principal Researcher – Senior or Principal Zoologist with extensive experience in fauna field surveys. This experience may be applied to terrestrial or aquatic environments, and equally to a specific target group (e.g., turtles).

Regional General Manager – responsible for company performance and people management across a geographic area (e.g., Victoria, South Queensland, North Queensland).

Secretary - a role fulfilled by a fauna ecologist appointed by the Institution. The secretary deals with all documentation associated with the Institution's GHD AEC business (including minutes, proposals, decisions, declarations, and resolutions of conflicts of interest, correspondence, etc.) but is not a member of the GHD AEC.

Service Line Leader – an Australian Technical Leader role within the business overseeing technical development and its alignment with market requirements. Animal Ethics is incorporated in the Natural Resources and Aquatic Sciences Service Lines.

2. Membership

In accordance with Section 2.2.4 of the above-mentioned Code, the GHD AEC comprises at least one member of each category of membership (A, B, C, and D). Categories C and D must together represent at least one-third of the GHD AEC membership. The membership of the committee will remain as:

- Chair
- Category A - one member

- Category B - two members
- Category C - one member
- Category D - one member

At least one member from each of the four membership categories, as well as the GHD AEC Chair, are required to attend meetings, and must be present throughout the meeting. In the event that the GHD AEC chair cannot attend, then an acting chair is to be nominated by GHD and agreed by GHD AEC.

The GHD AEC meets at least quarterly with additional meetings scheduled as required to assess urgent project applications. Meetings are preferentially conducted in person but may be conducted via video and web conferencing in given circumstances (e.g., pandemic risk management) and during additional sessions.

3. Specific GHD AEC Tasks

3.1 The GHD AEC will review applications for projects and approve only those projects that are ethically acceptable (see Clause 1.3) and conform to the requirements of the Code (Clause 2.3.2 i) by:

- Judging whether a proposed use of animals is ethically acceptable based on information provided, demonstrating the decision complies with the governing principles of the Code (Clause 1.1) and balancing whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals involved is justified by the potential benefits.
- Assessing an application for the use of animals for scientific purposes only after the applicant is duly notified and provided with the information required for the GHD AEC to decide.
- Assessing whether the information provided by the Principal Researcher adequately and concisely details appropriate justification of the proposed animal use, its impact on the animals, and the adequate means by which any potential harm (a negative impact on the wellbeing of an animal) will be minimised. Demonstrating that the use of animals complies with the Principles of Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement.
- Assessing all project applications against the guidelines and standards developed for the ethical treatment of animals (e.g., the Code).
- Reviewing, approving, rejecting, or requesting modification of project applications for use of animals in research.
- Seeking clarification of and/or agreement to amendments to a proposal from the Principal Researcher. The Principal Researcher may be invited to address the GHD AEC in person or via video and web conferencing.
- Making decisions based on consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable effort to resolve differences, the GHD AEC, and the Principal Researcher will seek ways of modifying the project to reach consensus. If consensus is still unachievable, the GHD AEC should only proceed to a majority decision after members have been allowed a period to review their positions, followed by further discussion.
- Advising the Principal Researcher of the GHD AEC's decision in writing as soon as possible.

3.2 GHD AEC will review applications for activities associated with the care and management of animals in facilities, including procedures applicable to breeding programs integral to the maintenance of an animal line, and approve only those activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code (Clause 2.3.2 ii)

- a) GHD does not currently hold or breed wildlife in facilities and has no intention to do so.

3.3 The GHD AEC will conduct follow up reviews of approved projects and activities (Clause 2.2.32 iii) and allow the continuation of approval for only those projects and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code (Clause 2.3.2 iii) by:

- a) Reviewing all post survey reports for projects and assessing their compliance with the Code, the project application and, where relevant, the GHD's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- b) Reviewing Adverse Incident Reports arising from field surveys and determining compliance with the Code, the project application and, where relevant, the SOPs. Also identifying improvements and amendments to the SOPs arising from the review of adverse incidents. Then, communicating requirements or amendments to approved researchers.
- c) Reviewing field survey audits and identify projects for future audits in each State.
- d) Reviewing approved researchers (Principal Researchers, Associate Investigators and Field Assistants) compliance with the Code and GHD policies and procedures.
- e) Recommending changes to the GHD AEC fauna survey and monitoring SOPs as required.
- f) Withdrawing approval for a project if:
 - i. an inspection detects activities that are non-compliant with the Code
 - ii. an animal is used in a way other than as approved by the GHD AEC
 - iii. the GHD AEC becomes aware that an activity or project is associated with a higher welfare impact than that approved
- g) Advising the Principal Researcher if approval has been withdrawn. The Principal Researcher may seek clarification of the reasons for rejection from the GHD AEC and subsequently, provide additional information. Any objection raised and additional relevant information provided must be considered by the GHD AEC.
- h) Maintaining a record of proposals and projects by:
 - iv. Requiring electronic notification of all project applications via the Institution, including completion of the Institution's Teams project application task and attachment of the completed application form. Applications will be maintained in the Teams file repository.
 - v. Requiring electronic post survey completion reports to be lodged via the Institution's GHD AEC Teams site. Post survey reporting includes completion of the teams' post survey report task plus attachment of the completed post survey report form, and it will be maintained in the teams file repository to be reviewed at each quarterly meeting.

- vi. Requiring electronic adverse incident reports to be lodged via the Institution's GHD AEC Teams site. Adverse incident reporting includes confirmation of an adverse incident event occurring within the post survey report teams' tasks plus the completed adverse incident report form. Adverse incident reports will be maintained in the Teams file repository and reviewed at each quarterly meeting.
- vii. Reviewing all project applications at quarterly meetings or out of additional session meetings as required.
- viii. Authorising the secretary to retain all documentation associated with the Institution GHD AEC business (including minutes, proposals, decisions, declarations, and resolutions of conflicts of interest, correspondence, etc.) in the Institution's GHD AEC IConnect site (Animal Ethics Committee (ghd.com)).
- ix. Automatically assigning a document name including the year, project number and date to documents to be maintained within the Institution's GHD AEC Teams site.
- x. Maintaining documents within the Institution's GHD AEC IConnect site, naming them in accordance with the following convention: AAAA-BBB-C_xxx
 - A – Year
 - B – File type – MIN (minutes), AGE (Agenda), LET (letter), REP (Report), PMD (project management document), MEM (memo).
 - C - Revision
 - xxx – Name of document

3.4 The GHD AEC will monitor the care and use, of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care and use of animals in facilities (Clause 2.3.2 iv) by:

- a) Conducting annual inspections/audits of GHD activities in the field by GHD AEC members.
- b) Authorising delegates (GHD internal animal ethics sub-group member) to conduct data collection and monitoring of activities on sites on behalf of the Institution's GHD AEC. The Authorised Delegates are to deliver the collected data and other information to the Institution's GHD AEC for auditing.
- c) A minimum of three audits per year will be performed. Audit reports are to be reviewed at GHD AEC meetings and maintained on the Institution's GHD AEC IConnect site.
- d) Viewing animals during site inspections and monitoring activities, ensuring appropriate record keeping (a minimum of three yearly as mentioned above), which includes the review of project notification documentation and project details, in accordance with GHD Terms of Reference (ToR).
- e) Receiving post survey completion reports for approved projects so as to confirm that animal use is consistent with and in accordance with the approved application for the activity.
- f) Receiving and reviewing reports on adverse effects that impact on the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes.

- g) Identifying immediate changes to SOPs should the nature of an adverse incident require immediate changes.
- h) Receiving and reviewing annual animal use returns in accordance with State/Territory reporting requirements. Annual reports to be maintained on the GHD AEC IConnect site.

3.5 The GHD AEC will take appropriate actions regarding the unexpected adverse events (Clause 2.3.2 v) by:

- a) Taking appropriate action in response to unexpected adverse events, ensuring that animal wellbeing is not compromised. Any issue is to be addressed promptly, and activities with the potential to adversely affect animal wellbeing will cease immediately (see Clause 2.1.5 [v] [d]). Actions may include consulting with relevant people and, where necessary, suspending or withdrawing approval for the project or activity.
- b) Identifying specific mitigation actions to be incorporated into SOPs.
- c) Identifying specific mitigation measures requiring immediate communication to approved researchers for implementation.
- d) Authorising the emergency treatment or euthanasia of any animal by:
 - i. Reviewing and approving a Fauna Euthanasia Assessment Procedure, detailed in the SOPs, which informs all GHD staff of the procedures for the emergency treatment or euthanasia of fauna.
 - ii. Assigning responsibility and determining appropriate steps for the emergency treatment or euthanasia to Principal Researcher as detailed in the SOPs.

3.6 The GHD AEC will take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance (Clause 2.3.2 vi) by:

Ensuring that when projects or activities in breach of the Code are detected:

- a) Addressing the issue promptly acting in order to ensure that animal wellbeing is not compromised, and activities with the potential to adversely affect animal wellbeing cease immediately (see Clauses 2.3.24, 2.3.25, 5.2 [i] and 5.4 [i]) of the Code). Actions may include suspending or withdrawing approval for the project or activity.
- b) Reporting non-compliance and recommending remedial action to the activity Principal Researcher.
- c) Reporting significant contraventions of the Code, SOPs, or approved project procedures, to the relevant Business Group Leader and Regional General Manager before performance management by the Institution. Records of breaches of the Code will be maintained in accordance with Clause 5.10.
- d) Making recommendations to the Natural Resources and Aquatic Sciences Service Line Leaders regarding training and personal development needs of GHD AEC members and the Institution's staff in relation to the use of animals for scientific purposes.
- e) Making recommendations to the Natural Resources and Aquatic Sciences Service Line Leaders. These recommendations may involve facilities, additional resource requirements of GHD AEC members and GHD staff, all in relation to the use of animals for scientific purposes in accordance with the SOPs.

3.7 The GHD AEC will approve guidelines for the care and use of animals` on behalf of the institution (Clause 2.3.2 vii) by:

- a) Reviewing plans, policies, and procedures. This review includes project applications, post survey and adverse incident report templates, audit and project approvals templates and any other documentation provided by the Institution.
- b) Considering information/comments provided by any persons who raise concerns regarding the care and use of animals.
- c) Considering information/comments provided by authorised delegates (GHD internal animal ethics sub-group) monitoring and collecting data on behalf of the GHD AEC.
- d) Making recommendations reflecting a consensus view of the GHD AEC.
- e) Making comments in its internal annual report to the Institution.

3.8 The GHD AEC will provide advice and recommendations to the institution (Clause 2.3.2 viii) by:

- a) Providing advice and recommendations to the Institution regarding the care and use of animals for scientific purposes conducted on its behalf GHD, and the strategies required to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Code, whilst addressing matters affecting animal wellbeing.
- b) Annually reviewing the fauna survey SOPs to contribute to GHD's commitment to animal welfare.

3.9 The GHD AEC will report on its operations to the institution (Clause 2.3.2 ix) by:

- a) Submitting an annual report as per Section 2.3.28 of the Code on the activities of the GHD AEC.
- b) Submitting any reports relating to use of animals for scientific purposes as required by each State in which the GHD AEC is registered.

4. Appointment of Members of the GHD AEC

4.1 The GHD AEC members will be appointed, re-appointed, or retired, according to the following procedures:

- a) GHD AEC members are appointed for a three-year term. GHD AEC members can be re-appointed for up to two consecutive terms, with no limit to the number of terms for external members.
- b) Upon retirement or in the event that a GHD AEC member requests to leave the GHD AEC, a minimum of three months' notice must be provided to allow one transition meeting convening newly appointed and outgoing members. This procedure may be waived in exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical conditions).
- c) Upon notification of an outgoing group member, the GHD AEC Chair and the GHD AEC member are to seek suitably qualified candidates for the appropriate class of member.
- d) GHD AEC member appointments and re-appointments require the approval of both the GHD AEC Chair and nominated representative of the Australian Leadership Team.
- e) If the Chair resigns, the GHD AEC will decide on a suitable replacement.

- f) Before appointment, all members of the GHD AEC are to acknowledge in writing their acceptance of the Terms of Reference of the GHD AEC and any requirements for confidentiality required by the Institution, including how to seek advice without breaching confidentiality.
- g) If an GHD AEC member does not fulfil their responsibilities, the situation will be managed according to GHD AEC Grievance and Conflict Resolution Protocol.
- h) The role of secretary of the GHD AEC will be provided by the Institution.

4.2 The GHD AEC will require that all members declare any conflict or perceived conflict of interest by:

- a) Notifying the GHD AEC of all real or perceived conflicts of interest prior to their appointment.
- b) Declaring all real or potential conflicts of interest and the nature of that interest as matters arise. This must include all real or perceived conflicts within any items on the meeting agenda or any other matter relating to membership of the GHD AEC.
- c) Recording all declarations of real or perceived conflicts of interest in the relevant meeting minutes.

4.3 The GHD AEC will deal with situations in which a conflict of interest arises, including any situation where a member of the GHD AEC has an interest that may be seen to influence the objectivity of a decision by:

- a) Requiring a member whose objectivity may be influenced by an interest to leave the meeting during the consideration and decision-making process.
- b) Recording the method of dealing with any conflict in the relevant meeting minutes.
- c) Considering and responding to any concern or claim raised by another party that an GHD AEC member has a conflict of interest that may have influenced the objectivity of an GHD AEC decision.
- d) Advising complainants, in writing, of the GHD AEC's response to any concern or claim relating to conflict of interest. If the complainant is not satisfied with the GHD AEC's response, a grievance may be lodged as per the GHD AEC Grievance and Conflict Resolution Protocol.

4.4 The GHD AEC will deal with situations of grievance and conflict resolution by:

- a) Following the procedures outlined in the GHD AEC Grievance and Conflict Resolution Protocol.

5. Approval and Declaration

The GHD AEC Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures has been reviewed, updated and approved.

17/06/2022

Alison Colella

Date

Australian Leadership Team Representative - General Manager Northern Australia

The GHD Animal Ethics Committee agrees to comply with the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013* and the GHD AEC Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures.

17/06/22

Dr Natalie Clark

Date

GHD AEC Category B Member

Document Status

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