

# **ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEE**

## *Code of Practice*

Prepared for: Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Animal Ethics Committee

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**Conservation and Attractions**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Code of Practice

This document is intended to provide guidance to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' Animal Ethics Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee or the AEC) on their roles and responsibilities in assessing animal welfare for projects involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. The document also provides guidance to Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (hereafter referred to as the Department) personnel on the Committee's process and expectations for AEC project applications, review, reporting and non-compliance, and the roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

The arrangements and procedures are derived from the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (8<sup>th</sup> Edition 2013)* (hereafter referred to as the Code), the Department's *AEC Terms of Reference* and relevant Department policies and guidelines.

## 1.2 Role of the Animal Ethics Committee

The Department's use of animals for scientific purposes is subject to licensing under the Animal Welfare Act and is directed by the Code. The Department appoints and supports an Animal Ethics Committee to ensure that animals used for scientific purposes are cared for and used in an ethical and humane manner and that the Department meets its commitments under the Animal Welfare Act, its *Licence to use animals for scientific purposes* and the Code.

The Committee assesses all applications involving Departmental personnel, associated personnel from other institutions, Departmental facilities or animals used for scientific or educational purposes. The Committee meets six times a year in the months of February, April, June, August, October and December. Refer to the *AEC Terms of Reference* for further information on the Committee's functions and membership.

# 2 Projects requiring AEC assessment

As defined in the Code, a project is an activity<sup>1</sup> or group of activities that form a discrete piece of work that aims to achieve a scientific or teaching purpose.

Projects that require AEC assessment are:

- a) Any project that uses or cares for live (non-human) vertebrate animals for a scientific purpose. This includes introduced or pest vertebrates, fish and cephalopods.

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<sup>1</sup> Activity is defined in the Code as *any action or group of actions undertaken that involves the care and use of animals, including acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry of those animals. An activity may involve one or more procedures. Activities are described in an application to the animal ethics committee.*

- b) Observational projects with a scientific purpose that may have an impact on animal welfare either directly or indirectly by affecting the behaviour of an animal or the habitat or environment in which the animal lives (e.g. spotlighting; cameras that are used with a visual, olfactory or audible lure).
- c) Projects with a scientific purpose that may not be targeting vertebrate animals but that have an impact on the welfare of vertebrate animals (e.g. invertebrate monitoring).
- d) Those projects that comprise a teaching activity that forms part of an approved curriculum or competency requirements as per the Code.

To ensure best practice in animal welfare, the AEC may also review and assess Departmental projects and guidelines relating to operational control of declared pest vertebrates or other operational actions requiring capture, handling or euthanasia of animals using new technologies or devices that require investigation, training and the development of SOPs.

To ensure best practice in animal welfare, voluntarily requests can be made to the AEC to assess projects that are educational in nature but do not form part of an approved curriculum or competency requirement.

Observational wildlife studies that do not use or handle animals, do not impact on habitat or environment and that have been determined not to have an impact on animal welfare (e.g. unbaited camera monitoring and passive bird watching) do not generally require AEC assessment.

The Department, in consultation with the Committee, will continually review data and peer-reviewed literature that may identify projects that the Department considers should be assessed through the AEC, despite not being required under the Code.

### 3 Animal Welfare Responsibilities

Animal welfare is the responsibility of all personnel involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Personnel involved in AEC approved projects should ensure that they have read and understood their obligations under the Code and be aware that they have personal responsibility for all matters that relate to the wellbeing of animals that they use.

Personnel involved in an Animal Ethics Committee approved project must:

- a) Apply the principles of the Code;
- b) Follow relevant policies and procedures of the Department and the AEC;
- c) Obtain approval from the AEC before commencing a project that involves the use of animals;
- d) Conduct the project in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the AEC approval;
- e) Where required undertake education, training and a competency assessment;
- f) Ensure that procedures using animals are performed competently;
- g) Maintain records; and

- h) Report to the AEC as required.

A Chief Investigator (CI) is a person who has ultimate responsibility for the care and use of animals in a project. A CI must:

- a) Ensure that all people involved in the project understand and accept their roles and responsibilities;
- b) Ensure that procedures and resources are in place so that all project personnel can meet their responsibilities, including training and supervision, as appropriate; and
- c) Be competent with respect to the wellbeing of animals used in the project.

The CI does not relieve the individual responsibility of other personnel working with animals in the project.

## 4 Competency of Project Personnel

Under the Code, “competent” is defined as *“the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required regarding the care and use of animals. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply knowledge and skill to new situations and environments”*.

The Department’s licence stipulates that it must be able to ensure that all persons involved in the conduct of an approved project have the appropriate skills. As part of the project assessment and approval, personnel competencies will be reviewed and assessed by the AEC. Assessment of competency will consider a person’s experience with the species and taxonomic groups and the monitoring or survey techniques. Assessment will also consider any site-based or environmental conditions that may increase the risks and potential adverse events that an animal handler may encounter. Demonstrated experience and ability to ethically and effectively manage adverse situations will be an important consideration when assessing competency.

The Committee and the Executive Officer (Executive Officer) will:

- a) Maintain a record of CI competency on each project file;
- b) Ensure CIs are aware of the requirement and process for being deemed competent in specified procedures; and
- c) Where appropriate, make provision for officers to be trained in required procedures in the course of carrying out an approved project so long as that training is under the direct supervision of a competent person, with the prior approval of the Committee.

It is also the responsibility of CIs to ensure that all animal handlers and other personnel working on their project are competent to undertake the required tasks.

CIs are to:

- a) Ensure that all project personnel that will be handling animals are approved and listed on the project;

- Ensure that all project personnel that will be handling animals are competent to undertake the range of procedures identified in the project; including that they have the necessary training, experience and competency to deal with unforeseen circumstances, including but not limited to skills to administer first aid and euthanasia;
- b) Ensure that personnel that require training are supervised by a competent and experienced animal handler who is able to demonstrate best practice procedures in relation to animal welfare; and
  - c) Maintain a record of competency for all project personnel.

Project personnel wanting to undertake a specified procedure or sampling technique that requires a particular skill must receive endorsement by a trained and competent person and provide verification of the training or competency as part of the project documentation. In the case of bird banding, a copy of the approval from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme must be provided before undertaking work. Examples of specified procedures or techniques that may require endorsement by a competent and experienced trainer include:

- a) PIT tagging,
- b) Blood sampling,
- c) Tail tipping,
- d) Cloaca and buccal swabbing,
- e) Skin biopsies,
- f) Bird banding,
- g) Radio- or GPS-tracker fitting and collaring, and
- h) Use of leghold traps.

Where project personnel are unsure whether a procedure or technique requires verified endorsement, they should contact the Chairperson or the Executive Officer.

## 5 Project Documentation

In completing and submitting an application CIs should ensure they are familiar with Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Code. These sections describe the assessment requirements and the responsibilities of the Committee in determining whether the project documentation sufficiently addresses the assessment criteria.

Application and report templates can be found online on the AEC website <https://dpaw.sharepoint.com/resources/aec/SitePages/Home.aspx> or by contacting the Executive Officer:

- a) *New Project Application Form*
- b) *New Project Application – Observation Only Form*
- c) *Project Amendment Form*
- d) *Project Renewal Application Form*

- e) *Annual Report Form* (also used to submit a *Nil Report* and *Final Report*)
- f) *Adverse Event Form*

## 5.1 Submission

CIs should ensure the following when completing the project documentation:

- a) Project documentation has been filled out on the most current AEC project forms.
- b) Project documentation has been filled out in detail and meets all the assessment criteria (see Section 6.1). Project applicants should consider a peer-review process to ensure the application adequately addressed the governing principles of the Code, in particular high standards of scientific integrity.
- c) Project documentation demonstrates that the relevant Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been consulted and, where necessary, informed the project design and procedures (see Section 13).
- d) Project documentation is completed and sent directly from the CI to the Executive Officer (via email) at least three weeks prior to a meeting.

Poorly completed documentation is likely to result in delayed approval times.

## 5.2 Receipt and Processing

Upon receipt of project documentation the Executive Officer will review documentation for completeness; including:

- a) CI has acknowledged the declaration that they have read and understood the Code;
- b) Appropriate licences have been obtained and licence numbers are provided;
- c) All sections have been completed with sufficient detail; and,
- d) Where appropriate, inter-institutional agreements have been identified and/or provided (refer to Appendix I).

Where insufficient information has been provided the Executive Officer will notify the CI.

Applications will be added to the Agenda of the next meeting, or where appropriate, sent to the Committee as they are received.



## 5.3 Timelines for Submission

***Six weeks prior to a meeting:***

The Executive Officer, with approval from the Chairperson, will notify project personnel and Departmental staff of the upcoming scheduled meeting date and the submission deadline for documentation. All documentation to be assessed by the Committee must be received three weeks prior to a meeting.



***At least **three weeks** prior to a meeting:***

Where possible, the Executive Officer will review documentation for completeness to provide CIs with the opportunity to provide further information and resubmit the application if required.



***Ten to fourteen days prior to a meeting:***

All meeting documentation, including the agenda and the previous meeting minutes, will be sent to the AEC members.

*Late submissions:* Late applications will be held over to the next meeting. In exceptional circumstances the AEC may agree to accept a late submission for a meeting.

## 6 Project Assessment

The Committee will consider ethical and welfare aspects as well as the scientific or educational value of the use of animals for scientific purposes. The Committee will only approve those projects where the use of animals is justified, are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code.

### 6.1 Assessment Criteria

In reviewing and approving project submissions, the Committee must make a judgement on whether the proposed use or continued use of animals is ethically acceptable. This judgement will be based on information provided by the applicant and will balance whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of animals is justified by the potential benefits.

The Committee will consider the following in making the decision to approve a project:

Broadly:

- a) The application contains the level, type and clarity of information which allows the Committee to make informed decisions;
- b) The application demonstrates the CI's due regard for the welfare of animals (or related procedural requirements);
- c) The application demonstrates high standards of scientific integrity;

- d) The '3R' principles of replacement, reduction and refinement have been addressed;
- e) The application demonstrates the proposed care and management arrangements are consistent with the intent and requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and the Code; and,
- f) The intent or purpose of the project meets the expectations of the wider community regarding the use of animals for scientific purposes.

Specifically:

- a) The purpose and benefit of the project justifies the use of animals;
- b) The application demonstrates that the CI and animal handlers are competent and trained in the methods and in handling the species identified in the application, and that where required, supervision and training will be provided to animal handlers without suitable experience;
- c) The application demonstrates that relevant SOPs have been referred to and where necessary, informed the project design and procedures, including identification of risks and mitigation measures for sampling techniques and project procedures; and
- d) The application clearly demonstrates appropriate processes and procedures for capture, handling, euthanasia, unforeseen injuries and how the impact on animals will be monitored, assessed and managed.

To assist with the assessment the Committee may:

- a) Invite the CI to discuss the application with the Committee;
- b) Seek confidential advice from any source in regard to an application; and
- c) Ask for specialist advice from Committee members based on their experience and knowledge.

## 6.2 Communication of Committee Decisions

Decisions on submissions fall into one of four categories:

- a) *Approval*: approved without modification.
- b) *Conditional Approval*: approved subject to minor amendments, the conditions of which must be satisfied before work commences on the project. The Committee may agree that the Chairperson (and/or other nominated Committee members) can review and provide final approval once the CI has made the recommended amendments.
- c) *Resubmission*: the Committee will reconsider the application after major revisions.
- d) *Rejection*: not approved.

When the Committee has made a decision on a project, it will communicate its decision to a CI and/or project personnel through the Chairperson. The Chairperson will:

- a) Notify the CI in writing of the Committee's decision in a timely manner. The decision will be communicated clearly and where required, provide reasons for the decision.
- b) In the case of applications granted conditional approval, advise the CI that the project cannot commence until all conditions specified by the Committee have been met and documented in the application to the satisfaction of the Chairperson (and/or other nominated Committee members).
- c) In the case of applications requiring resubmission, advise the CI in writing that the project cannot commence until the application has addressed the concerns raised by the Committee and that the project application must be resubmitted to the next meeting. Where the Committee makes a decision of resubmission, provide the CI with the reasons for the decision and constructive feedback to allow the CI to decide whether to revise and re-submit the project.
- d) In the case of applications granted conditional approval or requiring resubmission, provide the CI with the opportunity to discuss the Committee's concerns, either in writing or in person.

Where applications have been modified in response to a conditional approval or resubmission, the CI must ensure that all project personnel have been advised of the changes and that the project personnel have acknowledged the changes.

## 6.3 Out of Session Assessment

In limited circumstances the AEC Executive may consider amendments to current approved projects or activities between scheduled AEC meetings. This is limited to the following:

- a) Requests for approval of minor amendment(s) to an approved project which cannot be held over to the scheduled meeting date; and
- b) Requests that address the need to change protocols urgently in order to improve animal welfare or avoid compromising animal welfare.

The AEC Executive will determine the definition of "minor" on a case by case basis, however, as a guiding principle: a minor amendment may include a change to an approved project or activity where the proposed change is not likely to cause harm to the animals, including pain and distress, and where the change may benefit their wellbeing.

Any decisions made by the AEC Executive will be ratified at the next AEC meeting.

The Committee will not assess new projects or project renewals out of session.

### 6.3.1 Personnel Changes

The Committee has approved delegated authority for the Chairperson to approve personnel changes. CIs must notify the Committee about changes in project personnel. This includes personnel that will be handling animals and that may be working unsupervised and therefore hold ultimate responsibility for animal welfare on a day to day basis.

The Chairperson must be satisfied that new animal handlers are competent and that the changes in personnel will not compromise animal welfare.

Where a CI may need to take a temporary leave of absence from a project (for a period of less than 12 months and with a fixed return date), the Chairperson will endorse, subject to competency, another person to act in the CI position for that period. An amendment form must be submitted prior to the original CI departing that is signed and acknowledged by both the departing CI and the temporary Acting CI.

Changes for project personnel and volunteers that will not be involved in handling animals (or their care and use) are not required to be reported.

## 6.4 Extraordinary meetings

In exceptional circumstances where a project approval, or an amendment to a project requires a quorate meeting decision (as per Section 2.3.6 of the Code) outside of a scheduled meeting date the Committee may agree to hold an extraordinary meeting. This would be limited to the following:

- e) A project that requires the immediate use of animals at short notice, such as for the diagnosis of severe disease events. If the project is approved, the CI to is required to notify the Committee as soon as practicable of start and finish dates, and the number of animals used.
- c) Time-limited decisions whereby delays to the assessment would result in greater harm or distress to animals or an outcome that is inconsistent with the Code, or for surveys dependent on specific environmental conditions.

Where a face-to-face meeting is not possible for a quorate of all members, videoconferencing and teleconferencing will be the preferred method to conduct the extraordinary meeting. In circumstances where these methods are not possible, quorate consensus via telephone and group email will be used.

## 7 Modification of Approved Projects

No component of a project may be modified from that detailed in the approved application without an amendment first being submitted and formally endorsed by the Committee on an *Amendment Form*. The Committee, CI and other project personnel must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that once a project has been granted approval, it remains consistent with all details of the approval except as formally amended by written agreement with the Committee.

The Committee will only consider amendments that contain the level, type and clarity of information with which the Committee would reasonably expect in order to make informed decisions.

Where changes are minor the AEC Executive may consider approving changes out of session as per Section 6.3.

## 8 Review of Approved Projects

### 8.1 Annual Reports and Nil Reports

All approved projects are subject to review. The Committee holds one meeting a year that focuses primarily on the review of projects through an annual reporting process. Currently the *Annual Report* meeting is held in February and annual reports must be submitted for activities that have occurred during the previous calendar year.

*Annual Reports* should identify the key findings from the work undertaken during the year and how the information is contributing to their understanding of the aims and objectives of the project. The report should also identify any issues that have occurred in undertaking the project and any improvements in practices that have been identified. Where the project is identified as being closed, the CI should submit a *Final Report* (see Section 8.2).

Observational activities, such as unbaited camera monitoring, that do not impact on animal welfare, but form part of a broader AEC-approved project, do not need to be reported in the project's *Annual Report*.

Where no animals have been used during the annual reporting timeframe, CIs must submit a *Nil Report* (using the *Annual Report Form*) and provide reasons as to why no work was undertaken. Nil reports should be submitted to the December meeting.

In reviewing projects the Committee will determine whether the project should continue or should be modified, suspended or discontinued, based on the principles of the Code and including consideration of the following:

- a) The project continues to balance the impact on animals with the value of the knowledge gained;
- b) Care and management remains consistent with the intent and requirements of the *Animal Welfare Act* and the Code; and,
- c) The Committee maintains confidence in the CI's regard for the welfare of animals and related procedural requirements.

## 8.2 Project Renewals and Closures

The current maximum term for an AEC approval is three years. This ensures that projects can be comprehensively reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect improvements in practice and animal welfare outcomes. The Committee may, at its discretion, approve extensions of up to 12 months if justified.

CIs seeking to continue a project beyond this time are required to submit a *Project Renewal Application Form*. Renewal applications should demonstrate that:

- a) The continued use of animals is justified and,
- b) CIs, where appropriate, have considered modifications to practices that would improve animal welfare outcomes.

Final reports: when a project is to be closed, the CI is required to provide notification in writing to the Committee and submit a *Final Report* (using the *Annual Report Form*). The *Final Report* should identify the overall achievements or outcomes of the project against the aims and any issues and improvements to practices that were identified during the life of the project.

### 8.3 Animal Welfare monitoring

In line with clauses 2.3.17 to 2.3.23 of the Code, the Department has established a number of strategies to monitor the welfare, care and use of animals. These include:

- a) Researchers completing an annual report and a final report on completion of the project.
- b) The AEC undertaking a regular (annual or biennial) audit for all projects that involve housing of animals in facilities (refer Section 12).
- c) The AEC selecting a number of wildlife research projects each year for audit. The Committee will assess and monitor projects based on their level of impact.

Experienced personnel, with delegated authority of the AEC, accompanied by the Committee where possible, will undertake field visits and/or review records and reports as part of the audit. Field visits will provide an opportunity for project personnel to discuss any welfare concerns that they have and to demonstrate field techniques and processes to the Committee.

The following process will guide the conduct of the audit:

- a) Prior to the audit, review any previous audit, *Adverse Event Reports*, and the animal welfare provisions and mitigation measures identified in the project documentation. Provide the CI or project personnel with the opportunity to identify any particular issues or concerns that they would like to discuss during the visit.
- b) During the audit, discuss and observe:
  - 1. Procedures (with a particular emphasis on those of higher risk to animal welfare);
  - 2. Sampling techniques and how impacts are minimised or managed by project personnel;
  - 3. Improvements or modifications that have been identified to provide better animal welfare outcomes;
  - 4. Project personnel's knowledge and understanding of animal welfare and their responsibilities under the Code;
  - 5. Monitoring records, project progress, potential future issues and any concerns raised by project personnel; and,
  - 6. Where applicable, housing, food and water, and health, condition and stock numbers.
- c) Assess whether or not the Project is conducted in accordance with the application and is meeting animal welfare expectations.

A report will be provided to the CI and project personnel, with a right of response and the report and response will be provided to the Committee.

The Executive Officer will:

- a) Ensure that any recommendations noted in the report are forwarded to the CI and/or the AEC for action; and,
- b) Table the report at the next meeting.

## 9 Adverse Events

**CI's must advise and provide a report to the Committee as soon as practicable after an adverse event has occurred.**

An adverse event is any event that has a negative impact on the wellbeing of an animal and was not part of the project plan but was associated with project activities. This applies to both target and non-target species and includes:

- a) Accidental death,
- b) Injuries,
- c) Disease,
- d) Pouch young taken into care,
- e) Behavioural abnormalities and,
- f) Humane killing.

Major injuries that result in an animal being held beyond normal release time or that require off-site intervention must be reported to the Committee as an adverse event.

Minor injuries that are treated at the site of capture and result in the animal being released as normal do not need to be reported to the Committee as an adverse event but should be recorded (e.g. taping of pouch young, treatment of minor scratches and wounds with basic first aid).

The process for submitting, receiving and assessing an adverse event is as follows:

- a) CI should submit, via email, an *Adverse Event Form* to the Committee as soon as possible after the event occurs.
- b) The Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of the *Adverse Event Form* and review for completeness. If required, the Executive Officer will request further information from the CI and ask for the form to be resubmitted.
- c) The Executive Officer will send notification of the adverse event with a copy of the *Adverse Event Form* to the Committee members as they are received, or at the earliest available opportunity.
- d) The Committee will consider the adverse events at its next scheduled meeting.
- e) The Executive Officer will bring to the attention of the Chairperson any adverse events that may raise concerns for ongoing animal welfare outcomes for a project.
- f) Where there are significant concerns identified by the Chairperson or by members of the Committee, the Committee may, on receipt of the *Adverse Event Form*, make recommendations to modify or suspend a project out of session.

Significant concerns are those which represent a critical risk to the ethical or humane treatment of animals.

The Committee will notify the CI, through the Chairperson, of the Committee's decision, which will be one or more of the following:

- a) Acceptance of the CIs recommended actions to address the adverse event;
- b) Request for further information;
- c) Provide advice to the CI on measures that might improve procedures to prevent further adverse events;
- d) Recommendation that the project is modified or aspects of the project discontinued; and
- e) Suspension of the project.

## 10 Non-Compliance and Disciplinary Actions

Where an aspect(s) of a project is found to be non-compliant with the Code or the approved project application, the Committee and CIs must ensure that the issue is addressed properly and that:

- a) Actions are taken to ensure that animal wellbeing is not compromised;
- b) Activities that have the potential to adversely affect animal wellbeing cease immediately; and,
- c) Advice is provided to the Institutional Licence Holder where individuals or groups do not act on or show due regard for such decisions and directives when effectively communicated.

Where non-compliance is identified, the Committee will follow the *AEC Non-Compliance Guidelines* (see Appendix II) to determine penalties or actions that may be taken.

Where any person has concerns of non-compliance or project personnel acting in contrary to the Code or the project approval, the person should submit their concern to the Chairperson for investigation. The Chairperson will investigate the concern, and if required, refer the non-compliance to the Committee for a decision on the course of action (in accordance with the *AEC Non-Compliance Guidelines*).

## 11 Grievances and Appeals

If a CI is aggrieved by a decision of the Committee, then in the first instance the Committee will offer the CI an opportunity to discuss the decision with the Chairperson and/or the Committee to try to resolve the differences.

Where complaints concerning the Committee's review process for an application or report cannot be resolved by communication between the CI and the Committee, the Department will ensure that the CI has access to a person external to the Committee, and independent of the project or related work, for review of the process.



Following this review, the Committee may need to review and re-evaluate its process in reaching its decision regarding the application or report. The ultimate decision regarding the ethical acceptability of an activity lies with the Committee and must not be overridden.

As per the Code, if the CI remains aggrieved after the process review, they may appeal the matter in writing to the Director General (Institutional Licence Holder), in which case the Director General will identify a person external to the Department to whom the grievance can be addressed and resolved.

## 12 Management of Animals in Departmental Facilities

The Committee is required to ensure that the care and treatment of animals held at all Departmental facilities which use or supply animals for scientific purposes is consistent with the Code. This includes any place where animals are kept held or housed, including captive animal displays and breeding centres, but excluding fenced natural areas where no animal husbandry is provided.

The Committee will:

- a) Consider and approve housing and animal handling arrangements involved in the care of animals at any Department facility which uses or supplies animals for scientific purposes;
- b) Consider, review and approve written procedures for each Department facility which uses or supplies animals for scientific purposes, including procedures on the general management of the facility and all routine husbandry procedures; and,
- c) Ensure the person in charge of the facility submits reports, as specified by the Committee, outlining any changes to the conditions under which the animals are held, staffing issues, events or elevated risks which may impact on a facility's ability to ensure the ethical and humane treatment of animals and/or meet its obligations under the *Animal Welfare Act*, the Code or the Department's *Licence to use animals for scientific purposes*.

### 12.1 Record keeping for animals in facilities

Animal carers must maintain records of the care, monitoring and health status of animals. These records must be accessible to all project personnel and made available for audit to the AEC, authorized external reviewers and the Department on request.

Records of animal monitoring must be sufficient to enable the AEC to verify that the wellbeing of animals has been monitored and allow review and critical investigation of the cause(s) of and responses to unexpected adverse events as a basis for future prevention strategies.

Monitoring and assessment will include: the criteria that will be used to assess wellbeing, the level and frequency of monitoring to ensure that any changes in an animal's condition are detected early; the criteria that will be used to determine when action is required; actions that will be taken so that adverse impacts on animal wellbeing are addressed rapidly and effectively; the methods for recording observations, treatments and actions; and

flexibility to ensure a rapid and effective response to changes during the course of the project.

## 12.2 Inspection of Departmental Facilities

The Committee is required to monitor housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in breeding and holding facilities, and therefore the Committee will inspect the conditions and animal handling arrangements involved in the care of animals at each facility. The frequency of inspections will be at a minimum annually but will be based on the type and extent of animal use at each facility.

In inspecting a facility, the Committee will:

- a) Inspect and take photos and written records of housing, biosecurity measures, contingency arrangements, condition of animals, animal handler competencies, feeding regime with particular attention to the structural, environmental and management requirements of breeding and holding facilities as listed in the Code;
- b) Assess project personnel knowledge and understanding of project animal welfare and their responsibilities under the Code;
- c) Assess monitoring records, project progress, potential future issues and any concerns raised by project personnel; and,
- d) Record their findings including the names of those who attended, observations, any identified problems, follow-up and outcomes on an animal facility inspection report form.

The Executive Officer will:

- a) Ensure that any recommendations noted in the report are forwarded to the facility manager and CI for action;
- b) In conjunction with the Chairperson, follow up the implementation of agreed actions, reporting any inadequate or inappropriate response to the Committee; and
- c) Provide the audit report at the next meeting.

## 13 Record Keeping

A CI is responsible for maintaining appropriate records to enable them to verify that the welfare of animals has been monitored as agreed, and in accordance with the Code.

The Executive Officer is responsible for record keeping and filing of all AEC documentation. The Executive Officer will maintain confidential corporate files for all projects. The Executive Officer will ensure that records relating to AEC business are maintained, including:

- a) A register of all applications to the Committee, including the outcomes of deliberations;
- b) Minutes that record decisions and other aspects of the Committee's operation;

- c) Records and inspections conducted by the Committee;
- d) Ensure all records relating to the Committee and its workings are maintained in accordance with Departmental requirements and remain available for review by the Department and authorised external reviewers; and,
- e) Maintain a database that allows for DPIRD annual reporting, and analysis of project information to inform and assist with continual improvement of animal welfare.

## 14 Standard Operating Procedures

The Code makes provision for commonly used tasks and treatments to be formally described and approved as a means of streamlining the development and evaluation of applications. The Committee and the Department will ensure that these Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):

- a) Provide best practice guidance in managing animal welfare based on up to date literature, project findings and reports;
- b) Are approved by the Committee and reviewed at least every 3 years; and.
- c) Made available to all Departmental personnel and Committee members on the Department website.

The development (and periodic review) of SOPs will include a process of review by person(s) with extensive experience and demonstrated competence in the activities covered by the SOP.

CIs should refer to SOPs when developing their projects and detail any proposed variation to an approved SOP when submitting their project documentation.

## 15 Emergency actions

Consistent with clause 2.5.5 of the Code, animal facilities staff and consultant veterinarians may carry out the emergency treatment or euthanasia of animals where they reasonably believe this is necessary for the maintenance of animal welfare.

If an emergency welfare intervention is considered necessary, animal carers must take reasonable steps to first contact the Chief Investigator. However the welfare of the animal must be the priority at all times and may necessitate immediate intervention. The Committee will endorse the emergency treatment or euthanasia of any animal, where such treatment is necessary to avoid unnecessary suffering in accordance with section 2.5.6.

## Appendix I: Applications involving non-Departmental facilities or personnel

The Committee is required to assess and decide on applications that involve Departmental employees where projects may be carried out in facilities (buildings or infrastructure) that are not managed by the Department. It must also, in some cases, assess and decide on applications involving project personnel from other institutions which have their own Animal Ethics Committee as outlined below, or other parties without access to their own Animal Ethics Committee, who by mutual agreement access and abide by the decisions of the Department's AEC.

### **Facilities not owned or managed by the Department**

In the case of applications involving the use of animals by Department personnel at facilities not owned or managed by the Department, the Committee must only approve applications which:

- Clearly demonstrate that the project cannot be done wholly within Department facilities;
- Identify any risks associated with undertaking the project at facilities not owned or managed by the Department and how those risks will be managed;
- Contain a signed, written agreement between the Department and each project affiliate.
- Where an affiliate retains any role in the day-to-day management of the animals, or is involved with treatment, monitoring or data collection, clearly specify the respective roles and responsibilities of the affiliate and Department;
- Ensure each affiliate understands their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act and the Code; and that the standard of care and reporting required for a scientific use is of a high standard; and
- Specify that any routine management, transport or handling practice which does not form part of the project complies with applicable codes of practice.

Once the application is approved, the Committee and project personnel must ensure that all actions are undertaken in accordance with procedures specified in the application. The Committee may also inspect these facilities.

### **Joint projects involving departmental employees and personnel from other institutions which have an AEC**

In the case of applications for the scientific use of animals by Department employees in conjunction with another institution having an AEC, the Committees must, between themselves and identified through an inter-institutional agreement:

- Agree to individually approve only those parts of the project which will be undertaken within their own facilities or to delegate the approval of the entire project to one committee;
- Ensure that all necessary approvals are in place before the project commence;
- Ensure arrangements are in place to allow clear communication between each of the committees and investigators; and

- Ensure each committee is aware of all aspects of the proposed project and that any cumulative impact of procedures on animals is considered.

**Departmental personnel working on projects involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes that are managed by other institutions AECs**

Department employees working on projects assessed by other institution's AEC must:

- Ensure that the project has approval from that institution's AEC before being added to the project;
- Ensure that the application, once approved by another AEC, is submitted to the Department's AEC for their information; and
- Ensure that an inter-institutional agreement between the Department and the other institutions AEC is current.

**Non-Departmental personnel using Departmental animal holding facilities**

In the case of projects involving the scientific use of animals by non-Departmental personnel using Departmental animal holding facilities, the Committee will ensure:

- The same level of assessment, consideration and scrutiny of the project as if it were being undertaken by Department employees;
- Ensure personnel have adequate experience and qualifications; and
- Animal holding facility inspections are carried out once per year, or more frequently if warranted.

## Appendix II: Non-compliance Guidelines

### Department of Parks and Wildlife Animal Ethics Committee Non-Compliance Guidelines March 2017

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to the Department of Parks and Wildlife Animal Ethics Committee on penalties to recommend when non-compliance is identified.

Non-compliance offences vary in their severity and the recommendations of the Committee need to reflect the severity of the offence. Below are some guidelines to assist the Committee with determining the severity of an offence.

Minor non-compliance offence:

- CI had no intention to deceive the committee, assisted the committee in resolving the issue and/or immediately resolved the issue independently, and
- Was unlikely to result in a major welfare risk to animals.

Examples of a minor offence include late submission of annual reports, failure to inform the committee of minor amendments etc.

Major non-compliance offence:

- CI intentionally kept information from the committee
- CI did not attempt to resolve the issue independently
- CI did not assist the committee with investigation
- Actually or likely to result in a major welfare risk to animals

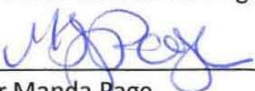
Below are penalties that the Committee can recommend in order of severity:

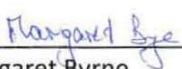
1. Written warning to CI
2. Suspension of project until issue is resolved and demonstrated to AEC. Suspension reported to CI and their supervisor.
3. Suspension of all projects CI is involved in. No further projects assessed by AEC until issue resolved and CI has clearly demonstrated to the AEC that further issues will not occur. This may require further training. Suspension reported to CI and their supervisor. A recommendation of further training may be incorporated into CI's annual performance appraisal.
4. Cancel all projects the CI is involved in. Report to CI, Supervisor, DG and DAFWA.

The Committee may also recommend other actions such as:

- Increased training, mentoring, supervision
- Demotion from/Replacement of CI on project
- Demonstration of competencies
- Increased reporting requirements

Endorsement of these guidelines:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr Manda Page  
Principal Zoologist / Chair AEC  
DATE: 23/5/17

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr Margaret Byrne  
Director of Science and Conservation  
DATE: 23/5/17