



## COVERSHEET

<b>Minister</b>	Hon Dr Shane Reti	<b>Portfolio</b>	Science, Innovation and Technology
<b>Title of Cabinet paper</b>	Transitioning health research funding from the Health Research Council to Research Funding New Zealand	<b>Date to be published</b>	9 April 2026

<b>List of documents that have been proactively released</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
November 2025	Transitioning Health Research Funding from the Health Research Council to Research Funding New Zealand	Offices of the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology, and of the Minister of Health
12 November 2025	Transitioning Health Research Funding from the Health Research Council to Research Funding New Zealand ECO-25-MIN-0185 Minute	Cabinet Office
5 November 2025	Future of Health Research Funding: Decision Making and Allocation RIS	MBIE and MOH
5 November 2025	RIS Annex 2 - Cost Recovery for a Fast-track Research Ethics Review Process	MBIE and MOH
3 December 2025	RIS Quality Assurance Feedback Form and QA Criteria	MBIE and MOH
14 August 2025 – 5 November 2025	Briefings on the Future of Health Research Funding	MBIE and MOH

### **Information redacted**

**YES**

Any information redacted in this document is redacted in accordance with MBIE's policy on Proactive Release and is labelled with the reason for redaction. This may include information that would be redacted if this information was requested under Official Information Act 1982. Where this is the case, the reasons for withholding information are listed below. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified and that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Some information has been withheld under the grounds of commercial information, confidential advice to Government, and confidential commercial information (trade secret).

## **Annex Three – The role of the HRC beyond funding health research**

---

### **Non-funding statutory functions of the HRC**

Under Section 6 of the HRC Act 1990, the HRC has several statutory functions that extend beyond funding:

1. Advising the Minister of Health on national health research policy.
2. Establishing research priorities through consultation.
3. Supporting research workforce.
4. Promoting and disseminating research.
5. Ensuring the development and application of appropriate assessment standards for research proposals.
6. Monitoring of Health and Disability Ethics Committees (HDECs) and Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs).
7. Approving ethics processes to ensure independent ethical assessment of health research by committees approved by the HRC Ethics Committee.

**Note:** Functions 6 and 7 would require attention if the HRC Act were repealed, as a new funding entity is unlikely to have the capability to undertake these functions.

### **The HRC Ethics Committee (HRCEC)**

The HRCEC plays a central role in New Zealand's health research ethics system. It is responsible for:

- Reviewing complex or nationally significant health research ethics applications.
- Providing independent advice on ethical issues in relation to health research, particularly those arising from new or complex areas.
- Overseeing the monitoring and approval of New Zealand's HDECs and IECs.
- Considering appeals on disputed HDEC decisions and the ethics of introducing innovative practices, as authorised by the Minister of Health.
- Producing guidelines on ethical research conduct.

**Note:** This function is currently funded through Vote Health. If not undertaken by the HRC, these functions would need to be transferred to another entity (i.e. Ministry of health or MBIE).

## How the ethics approval system works

### National Ethics Advisory Committee (NEAC)

The NEAC is a ministerial advisory committee established under section 92 of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022. It advises the Minister of Health on ethical issues related to health and disability research and services and sets National Ethical Standards.

These standards guide HDECs, IECs, and researchers, ensuring ethical review processes are consistent, transparent, and culturally responsive, particularly for Māori and Pacific peoples. NEAC does not directly approve or monitor ethics committees, but its standards underpin their review processes.

### Health and Disability Ethics Committees (HDECs) and Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs)

HDECs and IECs are the two approved types of ethics committees that review health research.

HDECs review research that:

- Involves clinical or interventional studies (e.g. trials, surgical procedures, medical devices).
- Uses identifiable health information without consent.
- Involves vulnerable populations.
- Has potential for harm.
- Aims to generate generalisable health or disability outcomes.

IECs review non-clinical research from universities or research institutions, including:

- Interviews, surveys, focus groups.
- Use of human tissue or de-identified health data.
- Observational studies.
- Research involving vulnerable populations.
- Māori and Pacific health research requiring cultural consultation.
- Animal research (also requires separate ethics approval).

Universities, Te Whatu Ora districts, and other institutions often have their own IECs. Researchers affiliated with these institutions can apply through their internal ethics committees, especially for studies out of scope for HDECs.

**Note:** IECs must be approved by the HRCEC to review HRC funded applications.

## Summary of the Ethics Committees

Committee	Purpose	Host	Legislation
<b>National Ethics Advisory Committee (NEAC)</b>	Provides strategic advice to the MoH and sets the standards.	MoH	S92 of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022
<b>Health Research Council Ethics Committee (HRCEC)</b>	Approves and monitors <b>Health and Disability Ethics Committees (HDECs)</b> and <b>Institutional Ethics Committees</b> .	HRC	S25-S30 HRC Act Describes purpose and memberships S31 All research proposals must be assessed by ethics committee.
<p>While the HRC does not establish HDECs, HRCEC approves HDECs to conduct ethical reviews of health and disability research and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensures that HDECs operate in accordance with national ethical standards set by the NEAC.</li> <li>conducts formal approval and re-approval processes, including annual reporting and review of committee procedures.</li> </ul>			
<b>Health and Disability Ethics Committees (HDEC)</b>	Approves research funded by HRC	MoH	HDECs are established under Section 87 of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022. They are set up by the Minister of Health.
<b>Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs)</b>	IECs handle research that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is not clinical or interventional in nature.</li> <li>Does not involve significant risk to participants.</li> <li>May involve social science, education, psychology, or public health studies.</li> <li>If a study involves higher-risk procedures, it may be referred to a HDEC.</li> </ul>	IECs are typically housed within tertiary education institutions or research organisations.	The IEC needs to have approval from the HRCEC to review HRC-funded applications