

COMMUNITY RESEARCH ENDORSEMENT PANEL

Terms of Reference

1. PURPOSE

The Community Research Endorsement Panel has been established to contribute to achieving Thorne Harbour Health¹'s purpose of reducing HIV transmissions. It will do this by working in partnership with other agencies by promoting the health and well being of gay men and all people living with HIV, and work together to improve health outcomes for the sexually and gender diverse communities.

It must be noted that the HIV and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities are subject to a high degree of research requests. All of the populations are marginalised within society and experience high levels of discrimination and stigma. Issues of access and equity are a high priority and advocacy is a core function of service providers in the sector, based upon sexuality, HIV status and gender identify.

The Community Research Endorsement Panel shall work to the Principles of the National Health and Medical Research Council standard and expect researchers to be mindful of this. Research applications need to be aware and observant of:

- Cultural sensitivities
- Integrity
- Justice
- Equality
- Beneficence
- Respect.

Researchers should address relevant issues of research design, ethics, culture and language accordingly and to this end, the Panel shall invite, examine and consider research proposals that relate to the HIV and LGBTI communities.

2. ROLE

The role of the Panel is to:

- Promote the value of community partnerships in research.
- Act as a resource for the organisation in regard to research and ethical issues.
- Review research proposals with the view of its value and impact on the affected communities.
- Advise researchers on ethical considerations in regard to affected communities' issues.
- Provide advice to researchers on sensitivities related to conducting research with Thorne Harbour Health clients, people living with HIV and the LGBTI communities.
- Endorse research as being acceptable to and enhancing outcomes to the affected communities.
- Provide advice on recruitment.

¹ The Victorian AIDS Council Inc (**VAC**) and the Gay Men's Health Centre Inc (**GMHC**) are separate legal entities and incorporated associations. The entities operate under the trading name of Thorne Harbour Health.

- Work within the guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council standard, ensuring evidence based information is utilised to achieve best practice and that the community's range of attitudes and concerns are reflected throughout the process. End users/consumers, relevant disciplines and clinical experts are involved in the Panel's deliberations.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The Community Research Endorsement Panel Chair shall be a member of the VAC/GMHC Board.

The Secretariat shall serve and support the Panel but not be an active participant in determining the outcome of any research application.

The initial Panel shall be drawn from agencies and organisations that have experience in the HIV and LGBTI community and it is expected that members shall have an understanding of the inter-relationship between research and practice. They will also represent a diversity of sexuality and gender.

The Panel shall consist of a minimum of six (6) community members and a maximum of twelve (12).

Membership will include nominees from the following organisations or groups:

- Two representatives of the VAC/GMHC Board, (i.e. not including the Panel Chair)
- A representative of Living Positive Victoria (LPV)
- A representative from Positive Women Victoria (PW)
- A representative of Transgender Victoria (TGV)
- A representative of Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV)
- A representative of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL)
- A representative from Harm Reduction Victoria (HRV)
- A Clinician
- An Ethicist
- Other organisations, as may be required.

4. SELECTION OF MEMBERS

Members of the Panel will be appointed at its first meeting following the VAC/GMHC Annual General Meeting on the recommendation of the previous Community Research Endorsement Panel.

The Panel shall seek nominations from other organisations, bodies or individuals if required and/or deemed to enhance the Panel's expertise.

5. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The Panel shall meet to consider each application. It should meet at least twice a year to consider issues related to research. Additional meetings shall be called by the Chair if required to discuss issues.

6. QUORUM

Each meeting shall require at least half of the membership plus one (1) of those represented on the Panel.

7. RESEARCH REVIEW PROCESS

All proposed research applications shall be directed in the first instance to the Community Research Endorsement Panel's Secretariat. (Enquiries can be discussed with the Secretariat prior to any formal process being initiated). Applications are to be lodged electronically.

Upon receipt of an application the Secretariat shall:

- Forward the application and all supporting documents electronically to the Panel members.
- The Panel members have ten (10) working days to consider the application.
- At the end of this period, the panel shall formally be convened to discuss the merits of the application and offer a view as to its approval or otherwise.
- This may at times require the applicant to make themselves available to meet with the Panel to further clarify aspects of the research or to submit additional supporting documentation, if the panel considers this would be beneficial to inform the decision making process.
- Applications are considered by the Panel within the context of the value and impact the research may have on the communities represented by the Panel members.
- All proposed research shall then be:
 1. Approved
 2. Approved conditionally
 3. Declined.
- This shall be conveyed to the researcher by the Secretariat both verbally and with a formal letter.
- If an application is approved the formal letter shall detail the Panel Approval Number: (Panel /Year/Application Number)
- It will be requested of any successful applicant that all promotional material related to any approved research include the THH Community Research Endorsement Panel Approval Number.

8. REPORTING

- Minutes of meetings shall be undertaken by the Secretariat. These shall be conveyed to all Panel members electronically.
- Once the minutes have been formally accepted by the Panel members, they shall be tabled by the Panel Chair at the next VAC/GMHC Board meeting. Other Panel members can follow this procedure for their Board meetings or formal reporting structures.
- The Chair shall submit a written report to the Board on an annual basis for inclusion in the Thorne Harbour Health Annual Report.
- The Secretariat shall make themselves available to work with the Chair in preparing the written report and to generally support the tasks required of the Panel.
- All research applications shall be recorded in the Community Research Endorsement Panel Register.
- Thorne Harbour Health will auspice and support the needs of the Panel.

9. RESOURCING

- The Panel, through the Chair shall identify and organise appropriate training for its members to ensure the Panel has the capacity to perform its role.
- The Secretariat shall support to the Chair and the Panel as required.
- Financial resourcing of the Panel is the responsibility and at the discretion of the VAC/GMHC Board.