Some common problems with applications

In addition to the HREC Application checklist, applicants should consider the items below.

1. Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form:

- PIS should include the statement "THIS IS FOR YOU TO KEEP"
- CF should include the statement "THIS MEANS YOU CAN SAY NO."
- PIS and CF should include letterhead and logo of institution/company undertaking the research.
- PIS needs contact details for researchers and contact details for ethics committee to which concerns can be directed
- PIS should be in simple English
- CF should also include space for witness and possibly interpreter if being used
- It is not necessary to itemise everything on the consent form if it is referred to in the PIS and they agree to what is in the PIS, however specific contentious items that might need careful thought to consent to can be listed as dot points.
- The CF should only have optional tick boxes if items are truly optional to participation.
- CF and PIS should include reference to possible future use of data and samples if applicable. It should be made clear in the PIS that any future use would be subject to further ethics approval.
- PIS should be limited to 2 to 3 pages if possible.
- Flipcharts or other tools may be used in addition to the PIS if necessary to clearly communicate the project's intentions to participants.

2. Participants:

- Please make sure that "Probable Incidental" is ticked for any category of participant that the research OR its outcomes might have an impact upon, even if not specifically being targeted or being directly contacted. e.g. Outcomes from audits of pre-existing data can have an impact on anyone if policies or procedures change as a result of that audit.

3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation (Targeted or incidental):

- Please make sure that you address Part D, Q36 thoroughly. This needs to be answered with specific reference to the six core values even if the project is looking at pre-existing datasets and where Indigenous people are not specifically targeted. If using HREA or NEAF please also complete Part D of our HREC form.

4. Design and Methodology:

- This should be described in lay terms as ethics committees consist of people from a variety of backgrounds. A simplified diagram or flowchart of the stages of the project is very useful. A detailed protocol can accompany the application.

5. Community consultation

- Evidence of stakeholder support should be provided e.g. community, peak body, or health service providers inc. Top End Health if project is at RDH

6. Signatures:

- All signatures should be included with application including signature of person with overall responsibility for research in the institution involved (Part E of current form).

7. Timeline:

- This is frequently underestimated e.g. how long projects will take to be conducted in a remote community
- The time taken for ethics clearance is also often underestimated.

8. Responsible Organisation:

- This is the organisation that the Principal Investigator works for, or the Institution through which a student is enrolled if the project is primarily a student project

9. CV is only required for Chief Investigator.

10. Submitted versions:
    - Submitted hardcopies often do not match the emailed version. They must be the same, including all signatures and attachments and emailed as one merged pdf. It is the emailed version that the reviewers will see and there is a risk that parts of the application will be overlooked if multiple attachments have been submitted.