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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

New code on responsible research practices and handling misconduct

Integrity in research, meeting community expectations, and handling allegations of misconduct are the focus of a new national code released today by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC) and Universities Australia.

The *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* advocates and describes best practice in research for researchers and institutions, as well as setting out a framework for handling breaches of the Code. While the document is aimed at universities and researchers, it can be applied by any organisation involved in conducting research.

While the overwhelming majority of researchers conduct research responsibly and within a sound ethical framework, it is important when incidents of misconduct do occur that they are managed appropriately.

‘It is therefore very important that there is a source of advice to guide responsible conduct, and ensure that processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct are consistent,’ NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said. ‘That’s why my colleagues at the ARC and Universities Australia have been as keen as I have been to produce this code.’

The Code provides advice on how to manage research data and materials; how to publish and disseminate research findings (including proper attribution of authorship); obligations in peer review; how to collaborate across institutions; and how to manage conflicts of interest. The Code also provides guidance to institutions when establishing independent external inquiries to evaluate allegations of serious misconduct.

ARC CEO Professor Margaret Sheil said that the Code was a comprehensive document that would be a valuable resource for organisations undertaking research.

Universities Australia Chair Professor Gerard Sutton said the Code was a good outcome from the efforts of the three organisations.

‘This is a demonstration that the university sector takes very seriously its responsibility to maintain the highest standards of quality and ethical conduct in its research activities,’ he said.

The Code can be found at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r39syn.htm>

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