



# ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEE

**Dr Alana Mitchell**  
Chair, AMREP Animal Ethics Committee

The AMREP Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) assesses all proposals using animals for scientific purposes from the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, Burnet Institute, Monash University Central Clinical School and The Alfred. The AEC decides, on ethical grounds, whether the proposal to use animals is justified, and whether the welfare of the animals will be adequately protected. For animal use to be justified, the AEC must be convinced that the benefits from the use outweigh the potential costs to the animal. As such, the AEC is at the interface between the scientist and the wider community.

The AMREP AEC must also ensure that all animal use for scientific purposes on the precinct complies with the *NHMRC Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific (The Code)*, which sets out the responsibilities of investigators, institutions and AECs regarding the use of animals.

## Applications in 2010

One hundred and twenty-six new experimental proposals were reviewed by the AMREP AEC. Many of the applications received were complex and innovative. The animals used were principally mice and rats, but a small number of rabbits, ducks and dogs were also used.

Applications reviewed by the AMREP AEC in 2010				
Application type	Baker IDI	Monash CCS	Burnet Institute	Alfred Health
New experimental	81	35	8	2
Modifications	60	28	10	2
Tissue	17	6	1	0
Colony	21	12	16	0
Antibody	1	1	0	0

## Animal Ethics Committees

To manage the large number of applications, there are two AECs in operation at AMREP. Each review committee meets on a monthly basis, with meetings staggered by two weeks. For consistency and efficiency, modifications and other project specific documentation relating to an approved project are reviewed by the same committee as reviewed the original application. The Chair, Animal Welfare Officer and a member of animal care staff attend all meetings to maintain uniformity across the committees.

The AMREP Animal Ethics Governance and Policy (GAP) Committee was formed in 2010 to provide governance and policy across both review committees and to assist the licence holders in meeting their obligations under *The Code*. In 2010, the GAP Committee focused on improving the quality of submissions to the AEC by introducing a pre-review process conducted by the AEC Chair. This process helped improve consistency and encourage the use of lay language in applications. AEC interviews with investigators were also introduced to explain experimental details where necessary. A review of process timelines by the GAP Committee showed that these initiatives resulted in a 60% improvement to animal ethics application approval times.

## Standard Operating Procedures

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is a detailed description of a standardised procedure. Using an SOP can allow researchers to reuse the description of a routine procedure in ethics applications and may save the AEC time in approving well-established procedures. A review and update of the library of Standard Operating Procedures commenced in 2010.

## Communication

A GAP Committee Newsletter was established in 2010 to convey critical aspects of AEC activity and policy to researchers. A new Animal Ethics website [amrepaec.bakeridi.edu.au](http://amrepaec.bakeridi.edu.au) was launched to assist investigators with locating animal ethics resources.

## Training

Following the Bureau of Animal Welfare's recommendation, the GAP Committee implemented a training program in animal ethics legislation and animal welfare requirements for researchers. All active animal users are required to attend one training session each year. The training consists of a 1-hour refresher program for laboratory heads whose staff use animals and a comprehensive 3-hour training session for active animal users.

## AMREP AEC Membership

- Dr Alana Mitchell (Chair)
- Dr Mandy Errington (Veterinarian)
- Dr Kay Juliff (Veterinarian)
- Dr Lucy Uren (Veterinarian)
- Dr Clinton Bruce (Scientist)
- Dr Judy de Haan (Scientist)
- Dr Margaret Hibbs (Scientist)
- Dr Ian Burns (Animal welfare)
- Dr Alan Sherlock (Animal welfare)
- Robyn Sullivan (Animal welfare)
- Noel Ansell (Lay member)
- Jim Gigas (Lay member)
- Ashley Wolff (Lay member)
- Debra Ramsey (Animal Care/Facility Manager)
- David Spiteri (Animal Care)
- Leia Demtschyna (Secretary)

## AMREP Animal Ethics Governance and Policy (GAP) Committee Membership

- Dr Andrew Giddy (Chair)
- Patricia Baitz (Lay member)
- Dr Mandy Errington (Veterinarian)
- Heather Gallichio (General Manager, Research Office)
- Professor Stephen Jane (Licence Holder Nominee)
- Professor Fabienne Mackay (Scientist)
- Dr Alana Mitchell (Chair, AMREP AEC)
- Debbie Ramsey (Animal Care/Facility Manager)
- Robyn Sullivan (Animal welfare)
- Leia Demtschyna (Secretary)