

AIATSIS Human Research Ethics Committee

Template for a Plain English Research Statement

No two research projects are the same, and there can be several ways of explaining what a project is designed to do and how it will be carried out. Nonetheless, this **Template is designed to prompt you into including in your Plain English Research Statement important information about your project.** This includes information which may be obvious to you but less obvious to the research subjects or participants.

A Plain English Research Statement need not be provided in writing – you could explain your project by making a short video about it to show to research subjects or participants. **The plain English Research Statement must be distributed to any research subjects or participants**, and can be used more widely for community information purposes. From the AIATSIS Ethics Committee’s point of view, it is important that making the Statement is recorded in some way, for example has been acknowledged by the participants on the informed consent form.

This Template is not a pro forma. While you will definitely need to put some statements from the template – eg about who the researchers are – into your Plain English Research Statement, other statements are options which will be appropriate to some projects but not others.

You should change the English in this Template, or translate it into indigenous languages, to suit your audience. The Template is written in fairly colloquial English, because many indigenous Australians have limited education in formal, complex English, and it can be easy for researchers to underestimate the gap between this level of formal education and their own level of education in English. For people with limited formal education, complex written English may be even more difficult to understand than complex spoken English. If your audience has a higher level of English education than that used in the template, you should use more complex English to avoid insulting them. But it is worth keeping in mind that the kind of plain English used here is now widely used in other contexts for general audiences – eg in Centrelink forms and on bank credit applications.

[Use appropriate letterhead or provide up-to-date contact details and space for a date]

[NAME OF RESEARCH PROJECT]

Who is involved in the project?

This research project is being conducted by me/us, [insert name(s) of researcher(s)].

I am/we are [insert qualifications, eg anthropologists] who work(s) for [insert name of employer or organisation paying for the work to be done].

The research is supported by [insert name of people or organisation providing community support]. I/We can show you the letter of support if you want to see it.

(And where relevant)

[Insert name of organisation] is helping with this research by [insert details, eg letting us look at their records or database.]

I/We have/I am/we are trying to get some grant money from **AIATSIS** [or other source] to do this research.

This research project has been approved by the [insert name of any relevant institution, eg a university] Human Research Ethics Committee [and/or by the **AIATSIS** Human Research Ethics Committee]

What will the researcher(s) do?

I/We are trying to find out [set out here your research objectives clearly, eg:

- what messages about culture or Aboriginality people are sending through their paintings,
- what people do to feel better when they get sick with diabetes,
- what helps [Koori] kids to learn better at school,
- how old the rock art at X place is
- whether some bush medicines might be useful for cancer treatment.

(You may like to compile an additional list of 'things we are interested in hearing/talking about/seeing/finding out' etc)

I/We will [set out your research methods here, explaining anything that may not be obvious, eg:

- interview people one by one about Y topic, writing down/videoing what they say;
- ask you to be part of a 'focus group'. This means that you sit in a group and talk to other people while the researcher(s) listen/video the session so they can study it later. I/we will ask you to promise not to tell people outside the group what other people say inside the group;
- ask you to come out to X site with us and look for axes or other things that

- people may have left there long ago.
- ask you to tell us what you know about bush medicines, and to help us to find other people who know about them.]

These descriptions need to conform with the descriptions of research method which appear on the Informed Consent Form.

The research will happen around about [insert dates].

What will the researchers do with the information they collect?

(Choose or draft as appropriate):

The information will be used to [eg write a book, make a video etc] about [research subject].

- I/will have copyright in the book/video etc OR I/we will share copyright in the book/video with [name appropriate organisation or small number of individuals].
- I/we will ask you what personal/culturally restricted information can be mentioned in the book and what should be left out. OR I/we won't include personal or culturally restricted information without your consent.

OR (for scientific research which might result in a patentable discovery):

I/we will use the information to write articles in scientific journals. If, during our research, we make a patentable discovery, we will/will not include the; name(s) of [appropriate indigenous organisation or research participants] on our patent application. (Being named on a patent application means that, if the discovery can make money, [appropriate indigenous organisation or research participants] could share in any money made from the patent.)

OR (for research based on de-identified data):

I/we won't use any names to identify people who participate in this research. [It may be appropriate to mention blinding strategies here, eg we will only use names on cover pages of questionnaires, we will identify people by numbers only.]

AND (if appropriate, eg where data is de-identified but raw materials stored during the project):

I/we will keep the notes/(video) tapes of the interview/focus groups in a locked filing cabinet at my house in [insert at least town or suburb address] for [insert appropriate period, noting the requirements of National Privacy Principle 4.2 where information is no longer needed]. After that, I/we will either destroy them, give them back to you or ask you whether you want me to give them to an appropriate indigenous organisation.

Giving material to AIATSIS

If you agree, I/we propose to give all of the notes/(video)tapes to **AIATSIS** for safekeeping. Please note that:

- If I/we give personal information which identifies you to **AIATSIS**, the *Privacy Act 1989* (Cth) says that other people can only have access to it if you agree that they can. I/we will talk to you about who should be allowed to have access to this information, and how **AIATSIS** should keep it.
- If I/we ask **AIATSIS** to keep culturally restricted information confidential, the *AIATSIS Act 1989* says that **AIATSIS** must do so. I/we will talk to you about what to ask **AIATSIS** to do with culturally restricted information.

Benefits of the Project to You [or your community, family, organisation]

Optional clause. Be realistic.

Risks

If you have decided to describe the benefits of the project **you must also describe the risks.**