

What is research?

According to the National Health and Medical Research Council they define research as 'the original investigation undertaken to gain knowledge, understanding and insight.' It is a broad concept and there is no simple, single way to define research for all disciplines.¹

Understanding research in our context

For decades, our communities on the Eyre and Far West Coast of South Australia, alongside our Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHOs), have been involved in health-related research. However, it's important to recognise that Aboriginal people have been extensively studied, making them one of the most researched population groups in history.²

The origin of research topics

Often, the topics for research come from outside our communities, driven by government, academic, or professional interests. While many researchers strive to ensure that their work is led by Aboriginal people or conducted in true partnership with local community members and ACCHOs, the reality is that the outcomes of these studies often do not benefit or empower our communities at the grassroots level.^{3,4}

Why research matters to us

Research has the potential to bring about positive change when it is conducted in a way that respects and values our knowledge, culture, and priorities. It can help us understand health issues better, develop effective solutions, and ensure that our voices are heard in the decision-making process. When done right, research is a tool that can strengthen our communities and improve our health and wellbeing.

We encourage all researchers involved in health-related projects to engage directly with us. For research outside of health, we encourage researchers to keep us informed, particularly if they are partnering with services or organisations in the Eyre and Far West Coast region of South Australia.

Connect with us

The SAWCAN Research and Data Coordinator is your primary contact for all health and wellbeing related research and data matters across the Eyre and Far West Coast of South Australia. You can reach out anytime at research.data@sawcan.org.au

¹ National Health and Medical Research Council, January 2016, A Consumer Guide to Principles for accessing and using publicly funded data for health research, "ix"
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/data-consumer-guide.pdf>

² Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
Historical context of research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/ethical-guidelines-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples>

³ National Health and Medical Research Council, August 2018 Publisher, Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Historical context of research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/ethical-guidelines-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples>

⁴ Hunt J, October 2013, Issues paper no. 5 produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Engaging with Indigenous Australia exploring the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, what this means: effective engagement, "3"
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/7d54eac8-4c95-4de1-91bb-0d6b1cf348e2/ctgc-ip05.pdf?v=20230605181119&inline=true>

For more information
QR to our website



Guiding principles statement

Researchers must align with our expectations and commitment to achieving continuous improvement and meaningful health outcomes in Aboriginal health and wellbeing across the Eyre and Far West Coast of South Australia. Approaches **MUST** be community-centered, focusing on delivering culturally-safe care that addresses the physical, social, environmental, spiritual, and overall wellbeing needs of our people. We prioritise holding researchers accountable, ensuring shared decision-making and alignment with our research guiding principles. We expect research knowledge translation to support service delivery that strengthens our healthcare system.

Our research principles

To collaborate with our region, your research proposal must adhere to the following principles:

1. **Ownership and Empowerment** - Our ACCHOs / ACCHOs Board and Community members will have ownership and drive research and data activities.
2. **Inclusive Engagement** - ACCHOs and community members will be involved in every stage of research and data processes.
3. **Knowledge and Respect** - Our ACCHOs and community members will be acknowledged and respected for their knowledge and wisdom.
4. **Capacity Building** - Researchers will work to build research and data skills within the community.
5. **Relationship Building** - Researchers will establish trusting relationships and rapport with ACCHOs and community members.
6. **Transparent Communication** - Researchers will provide regular updates to ACCHOs and community members on project progression.
7. **Participatory Interpretation** - ACCHOs and community members will be included in the interpretation and evaluation of programs and projects.
8. **Indigenous Data Sovereignty** - We recognise and uphold Indigenous data sovereignty principles.
9. **Our Data, Knowledges and Experiences** - Any information learnt or accessed through research is owned by the local Aboriginal peoples.