



Guidelines for Peer Assessors

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ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

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ABN 67 162 349 171

PO Box 6322, Alexandria NSW 2015

Phone +61 2 8374 4000 Fax +61 2 8374 5000

anrows.org.au

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Introduction

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) uses peer assessment and review as an important part of the rigorous and transparent process undertaken to assess research and develop its publications. The *Guidelines for Peer Assessors* outlines the key features of peer assessment at ANROWS, including guiding principles, the peer assessment database, participation on selection panels, the peer assessment process, the code of conduct for peer assessors, and administration.

Within this context, peer assessment refers to the independent appraisal of each application by others who work, or have worked, in the field of violence against women. Peer review, refers to the critical feedback provided on publications and other resources to be produced by ANROWS. ANROWS peer assessors have been selected to conduct assessments and reviews because of their high level of expertise and leadership in the field of violence against women and their children. They include researchers, practitioners, community leaders and government policy makers, who provide expertise to support building a solid evidence base to reduce the impact of violence against women and their children.

The peer assessment process enables ANROWS to review grant applications and commissioned research impartially and on merit. It also contributes to ensuring the quality of ANROWS's research, products and services. ANROWS gratefully acknowledges the generous contribution of time, professional and personal commitment, and expertise provided by peer assessors.

Principles

ANROWS is committed to supporting research integrity and to promoting public trust in its operations. The core principles of the ANROWS peer assessment process are:

1. **Expertise.** Applications, commissioned research, publications and other resources will be assessed by people with expertise in the field of violence against women research.
2. **Fairness.** Applications, publications and other resources will, where appropriate, be assessed and scored against published criteria. The award of grants or support of a publication/resource will be based on merit. and criteria
3. **Transparency.** ANROWS publishes details of the Research Program application process, guidelines for peer assessors (including conflicts of interest requirements) and, following the award of grants, peer assessment panel membership. Feedback from peer assessors and reviewers will be provided to applicants and authors respectively.
4. **Impartiality.** To ensure impartial assessments, and prevent assessments from being influenced by bias or prejudice, these are conducted by two or more peer assessors. Peer assessors are required to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest throughout all stages of peer assessment and review processes. Such declarations will be managed by ANROWS staff as appropriate for the circumstance.
5. **Confidentiality.** Information provided throughout the peer assessment and review process will remain confidential.

6. **Ethical.** Peer assessors will be bound by a Code of Conduct and ANROWS will have procedures for handling complaints about misconduct, bias or prejudice. Projects which contravene principles of research integrity or of research ethics will not be funded.
7. **Quality.** ANROWS will only fund projects and release publications and other resources which are of a high quality.
8. **Efficiency.** Peer assessment of grant applications and peer review of publications and resources will be efficient, timely and meet advertised and/or agreed dates with ANROWS.

These principles also underpin the *Code of Conduct for Peer Assessors, Confidentiality, Privacy and Information Accountability Guidelines* and *Conflicts of Interest: Guidelines*, outlined within this document below.

Peer Assessors Database

ANROWS peer assessors are endorsed by the Board of ANROWS for inclusion on the ANROWS Peer Assessors Database. This database will include people with expertise or experience across a broad range of disciplines working in the violence against women field. ANROWS welcomes applications at any time from those who are able to support this important work. Individuals may nominate themselves for consideration as ANROWS Peer Assessors, by accessing the nomination form on the ANROWS website, at <http://www.anrows.org.au/user/register>.

The breadth of experience represented on ANROWS's Peer Assessors Database ensures the integrity of the research conducted within projects funded through ANROWS and that the outcome of these projects will advance knowledge, understanding and practice to reduce the incidence and the impacts of violence against women and their children.

Peer assessors will be selected from the database as:

1. Members for peer assessment panels for the ANROWS Research Priorities Grants rounds.
2. Peer reviewers for publications and resources produced as part of ANROWS's Research Program and/or Knowledge Translation and Exchange (clearinghouse) functions.

Peer assessment panels

Peer assessment panels are appointed following the closing date for each ANROWS Research Priorities Grants round. These will be drawn from the database of pre-approved assessors, and the composition will reflect the needs of ANROWS during each grants round, with consideration given to:

- subject matter or disciplinary expertise;
- the Strategic Research Themes;
- diversity of representation, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee communities, and experts in disability, health, law and justice;
- representation from appropriate government departments; and
- geographical spread, where relevant.

Responsibilities of panel members

Panel members are responsible for:

- Reading all applications prior to the panel meetings.
- Providing a score for each application, with reference to relevant selection criteria, prior to the first meeting of the panel.
- Providing notes and comments that may be suitable for feedback to applicants.
- Participating in panel meeting discussion and deliberations.
- Providing suggestions for the development of project applications which are conditionally recommended.

Members of each panel will have a period of up to three weeks, prior to the convening of panels, to assess applications.

Administrative Support to the panels will be provided by ANROWS. ANROWS will maintain panel records and will convey feedback reports from the panels to applicants, including any requests for additional information required of conditionally recommended projects. ANROWS will also advise all successful and unsuccessful applicants of the outcome of the assessment process.

Research Priorities Grants round assessment process

The six stage process for assessing and recommending projects for ANROWS Research Priorities grants is outlined below.

1. Initial pre-selection of applications

The ANROWS Research Manager will assess all applications and establish whether they meet minimum project requirements established by ANROWS. Based on this pre-selection, she will determine the composition requirements of peer assessment panels in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and ensure an equitable spread of workload across panels.

The composition of peer assessment panels will be determined by the ANROWS CEO and Research Manager.

2. Selection of recommended projects for funding

Peer assessors within each panel will receive a summary of applications and will be asked to identify and declare any conflicts of interest to ANROWS. The composition of peer assessment panels will be managed accordingly, and members will then be able to access completed applications for individual assessment. Panel members will score each application against the Research Priorities Grants selection criteria, and prepare comments or feedback on the appropriate peer assessment form. This form is accessible through the ANROWS grants management portal, and panel members will be forwarded form access details when they receive applications to assess. A preliminary ranking of applications will then be compiled to provide an initial guide to assist panels with their deliberations when they meet.

Peer assessment panels may convene by teleconference or in person at a meeting chaired by the ANROWS Research Manager (or other authorized ANROWS staff member) to discuss applications in relation to the rankings and the Selection Criteria.

During these meetings, the panels will compile:

- 1) a ranked list of all projects and their recommendations for funding;
- 2) a list of projects not recommended for funding; and
- 3) brief feedback for inclusion in reports to applicants for all projects.

Notes will be taken by ANROWS staff, including reasons for amending preliminary rankings with reference the Research Priorities Selection Criteria.

Based on panels' meeting outcomes, ANROWS staff will conduct referee checks on recommended projects. Following this, ANROWS will present a report to the ANROWS Board containing the recommendations of each peer assessment panel.

3. Determination of ANROWS Research Program and award of funding

The ANROWS Research Program, including award of funding for specific projects, will be determined by the Board, with consideration to peer assessment panels' recommendations and available budget.

4. Notification of successful and unsuccessful applicants

ANROWS will notify applicants of the decision of the ANROWS Board in relation to their application, including the feedback from peer assessment panels.

5. Preparation and signing of funding agreements/contracts

Upon receipt of acceptance of notices of offer, ANROWS will prepare funding agreements to be signed by both parties. These agreements will include a Schedule containing reporting milestones and deliverables.

6. Publication of successful grants on the ANROWS website

Information about successful projects will be published on the ANROWS website. This will include the project title, research team and a brief outline of the project.

ANROWS's peer assessment process is an open assessment process. In normal circumstances, ANROWS will publish the membership of each peer assessment panel following the release of information about successful projects under the Research Priorities Grants. Publication of the names of assessors who have worked on the panels also allows ANROWS to acknowledge their valuable contribution to the work of ANROWS.

Review of publications and resources

Most publications and resources from ANROWS's Research Program and Knowledge Translation and Exchange (clearinghouse) functions will be peer reviewed to ensure they are of high quality. This will be an integral part of ANROWS's publishing process. In general, two peer assessors with relevant expertise will be drawn from the Peer Assessors Database. They will be invited to review publications within 3 to 4 weeks.

Code of conduct¹

The integrity of ANROWS is enhanced and supported by peer assessors' evaluation and recommendations about projects and publications. Peer Assessors have a responsibility to:

- Be familiar with the ANROWS Research Priorities Grants selection criteria or publication requirements.
- Respond to the request to contribute to the peer assessment panel process or review a publication in a timely manner, particularly if they are unable to participate.
- Declare if they are unable to participate in a peer assessment panel or review due to insufficient subject matter expertise or any other reason.
- Declare all conflicts of interest which may become evident at any time during the assessment or review process.
- Inform ANROWS if they become aware that they will not be able to provide an unbiased or impartial view.
- Assess and score the applications and review publications with consideration to selection criteria or requirements respectively.
- Ensure that their assessment is not influenced (positively or negatively) by any personal, financial or other conflicting considerations, or by intellectual bias.
- Keep all details of an application or publication, including details of the assessment, selection or review confidential to the relevant selection panel or ANROWS Board or staff.
- Not make contact with any applicants without prior agreement of the ANROWS Research Manager or relevant peer assessment panel.

Confidentiality, privacy and information accountability guidelines

The following *Confidentiality, privacy and information accountability guidelines* have been developed to ensure transparency and integrity of the process, and that the funding and review processes reflects national and international standards.

¹ Adapted from the Committee on Publication Ethics, [Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines) at <http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>.

1. Confidentiality

Activities of ANROWS peer assessors relating to a specific peer assessment or review are not to be disclosed without prior permission of ANROWS's CEO or Research Manager to any other person, with the exception of other members of the relevant selection panel, or ANROWS staff or Board members for whom the information is required to enable them to fulfil their duties. These activities include applications, deliberations, recommendations, or the content of draft publications. When permission is granted by the ANROWS CEO, peer assessors must consult with all relevant people whose personal information or business information may be affected prior to its release.

2. Privacy

Peer assessors must observe and comply with relevant Commonwealth and NSW privacy laws, including the *Privacy Act 1988 (CW)* and the *Privacy Act 2009 (NSW)*.² They must adhere to the standards contained in these laws for the collection, storage, use and disclosure of any personal information obtained in the course of their duties as peer assessors.

3. Information Accountability

All records of the assessments and reviews undertaken by peer assessors, including members' notes, meeting notes and minutes, and outcome records will be stored electronically by ANROWS for a period of seven years following the date of the publication of outcomes of each grant round or the release of a publication.

Conflicts of interest: guidelines for peer assessors

The integrity of ANROWS's peer assessment process depends on a consistent and transparent response to perceived and actual conflicts of interest. In the course of their duties, peer assessors will have access to applications from their colleagues and peers. Best practice in peer assessment is achieved when assessors act in good faith and with professionalism in relation to applications and publications which they assess or review. Peer assessors invited to be members of a peer assessment panel or to review a publication are required to declare any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. If peer assessors believe they have a conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest, or if a conflict of interest might be perceived by others, they are required to provide the ANROWS Research Manager with the relevant details to enable ANROWS to address each situation appropriately.

What is a conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest arises in any situation in which a peer assessor has an interest which may influence, or be perceived to influence, the proper performance of their responsibilities to ANROWS. This interest can be negative or positive, so may include situations where applicants or authors are:

² ANROWS requires adherence to NSW privacy law due to the location of ANROWS's national office being located in Sydney.

- employees of the peer assessor's institution or organisation, or of any organisation on which the peer assessor sits as a Board Director or Committee of Management member;
- mentees or mentors of the peer assessor;
- a person with whom the peer assessor has co-researched or published with, in the last five years;
- partners or business associates, or a person with whom the peer assessor has, or has had, a professional, business or financial involvement;
- relatives, friends or other personal associates of the peer assessor; or
- competitors or peers for whom the peer assessor has a pre-determined view.

Examples of conflicts of interest can be found in the list below. This list is intended to provide indicative guidance only and so is not exhaustive. An actual or perceived conflict of interest that must be declared to ANROWS may occur (but is not limited to) where a peer assessor:

- has contributed in any way to the preparation of the application or publication, or had input into it at any stage;
- has collaborated with, or published papers, applied for grants, presented conference papers or written reports with any of the applicants or authors;
- is a member of a work network, collaborative or integrated response partnership, discussion group or research group where the applicant or author is also a member;
- is a co-worker or colleague of the applicant or author, or works with the applicant or author in the same workplace, but with a different employer;
- has examined or assessed the work of the applicant or author previously; or
- has a social relationship with the applicant or author or with a member of their partner or family.

Managing Conflicts of Interest

Peer assessors are asked to sign a conflicts of interest declaration form and an acknowledgment that they accept ANROWS peer assessor's guidelines, at the time of their appointment to a peer assessment panel or agreement to review a publication.

It is the responsibility of peer assessors to inform ANROWS of any actual or potential conflicts of interest. Informing ANROWS as soon as conflicts of interest become apparent enables ANROWS to manage the conflict appropriately and helps to ensure the maintenance of the integrity and credibility of both ANROWS and the peer assessor.

Conflicts of interest should be declared to the ANROWS Research Manager at the earliest opportunity, preferably at the beginning of an assessment process or review, or as soon as they become apparent. A conflict of interest does not automatically exclude a peer assessor from participation in the proposed activity. The ANROWS Research Manager will assess the nature of the conflict and, if substantial, involve the ANROWS CEO in the matter for a decision.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research³](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39) provides additional guidelines that ANROWS will consider in the management of conflicts.

³ <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39>

Contact with Applicants

To support the management of any conflicts of interest, ANROWS requires that peer assessors not have any contact with applicants or authors outside of the assessment or review process while they are assessing that project or reviewing a publication.

If at any time during the assessment or review process an applicant or author makes, or attempts to make, direct contact with a peer assessor, the peer assessor must refer the applicant to ANROWS, and inform the ANROWS Research Manager of the contact at the earliest opportunity.

Fees and reimbursement of expenses

ANROWS peer assessors who undertake this work outside the course of their ordinary paid employment will be reimbursed for their time. The payment of a panel member sitting fee or a publication review fee is determined in advance by the ANROWS Board. In cases where peer assessors have to travel, for example where teleconference meetings are not suitable or where this work is not part of peer assessor's ordinary paid employment, travel costs will be reimbursed in accordance with ANROWS travel guidelines that are available on request from the ANROWS Office Manager.

Declaration

ANROWS peer assessors are required to sign a *Declaration of conflicts of interest* and *Acceptance of peer assessment guidelines* form prior to each appointment to an ANROWS peer assessment panel or upon agreeing to review an ANROWS publication. This form is provided on the following page. It should be printed, completed and scanned for return to ANROWS within a week of peer assessors' agreement to participate on a peer assessment panel or review an ANROWS publication.

Further Information

For further information about any aspect of ANROWS peer assessment or review, please contact ANROWS at enquiries@anrows.org.au.

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY
to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

Acceptance to be a panel member or review an ANROWS publication

I,....., declare that I accept appointment to be a member of / review:
..... [insert name of peer assessment panel or of draft publication].

Where I am eligible for any remuneration and/or reimbursement of expenses, I undertake to provide ANROWS with any necessary and reasonable documentation required to facilitate financial management of any fees or costs.

I acknowledge that I have read and accept the ANROWS *Guidelines for Peer Assessors*, including the *principles of peer assessment, code of conduct, confidentiality and conflict of interest* guidelines. I undertake to engage in all ANROWS peer assessment activities in accordance with these guidelines and principles.

I agree to act according to the ANROWS *Code of conduct* for peer assessors and to maintain confidentiality concerning all information made available to me in the course of my role with ANROWS.

In the event that I identify an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest between my duties as peer assessor and my personal, professional or pecuniary interests, at any stage in the assessment or review process, I agree to:

- a) identify and discuss that conflict of interest with the ANROWS Research Manager at the earliest opportunity of becoming aware of the conflict; and
- b) assist ANROWS in the proper management of that conflict of interest as required.

Signature:

Name:

Organisation:

Date: