

Telethon Kids Institute

Animals in Research Position Statement

At Telethon Kids Institute, our vision is simple – happy, healthy kids. We bring together community, researchers, practitioners, policy makers and funders to share our mission to improve the health, development and lives of children and young people through excellence in research. Importantly, we want knowledge applied so it makes a difference.

To achieve this, many types of research methods are applied, including the use of tissue cultures, computer modelling or other laboratory-based methods that do not involve animals. Only when these methods are unsuitable, and where it is absolutely necessary, will researchers use animals in their studies.

Telethon Kids takes extremely seriously its responsibility for the ethical use of animals in research and we are committed to undertaking high-quality animal research that is well designed, uses rigorous and expert peer review, is well reported and ethically justified. Data are shared to ensure the use of animals in specific research areas is not repeated unnecessarily. All studies are conducted according to the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*.

As a signatory to the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching's (ANZCCART) Animals in Research Openness Agreement, Telethon Kids is committed to the 3Rs of reduction, replacement and refinement as the basic principles of humane animal research. We are committed to openness and transparency around the use of animals in our research.

High standards of animal welfare, including state-of-the-art housing conditions, rigorous and regular welfare monitoring, and an on-site veterinarian and well-trained staff are central to our commitment to promote ethical, humane and responsible care of animals used for scientific purposes. These standards ensure that we minimise discomfort for animals and enable researchers to secure reliable results.

Telethon Kids recognises that not everybody is comfortable with the use of animals in research and we will continually review our practices with the wider scientific community to reduce the use of animals in research wherever possible and encourage the development of animal alternatives.



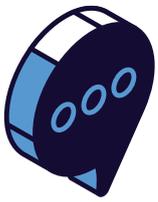
What we do

The Telethon Kids Institute is one of the largest and most successful medical research institutes in Australia, comprising a dedicated and diverse team of more than 1200 staff and students. We've created a bold blueprint that brings together community, researchers, practitioners, policy makers and funders, who share our vision to improve the health and wellbeing of children through excellence in research.

Indigenous health is an overarching research theme at Telethon Kids in recognition of the priority we place on addressing the ongoing disparity in outcomes for Aboriginal children compared with other Australian kids. It is embedded across every theme with all research expected to be inclusive in considering the cultural, social and economic contexts of Aboriginal families and children. Our three other research themes are Brain and Behaviour, Chronic and Severe Diseases and Early Environment.

Why we do it

Our vision is simple – happy healthy kids. Our researchers interrogate the 'why' around some of the most debilitating diseases and chronic infections that inflict children and young people. From brain tumours and respiratory disease to the devastating impact of vaping, Telethon Kids' is committed to understanding and solving complex health conditions and problems. We want our research to have impact so we can change the lives of children and young people for the better.



Frequently Asked Questions

Why are animals used for research at Telethon Kids Institute?

Telethon Kids Institute is committed to ensuring the ethical, humane and responsible care and use of animals in research. Animals are used in research only when it is absolutely necessary and when other methods of study are unsuitable.

The use of animals in research helps us advance scientific understanding and developing solutions to medical problems to protect the safety of people, animals and the environment.

Animal-based research has played a crucial role in basic and applied research, and in the development and testing of new therapies. At Telethon Kids Institute, animals are used to advance research into a range of serious issues including childhood cancers, lung disease and infectious diseases.

Which animals are used by Telethon Kids in research?

At Telethon Kids Institute animals used in research are restricted to mice and rats.

The Institute is involved in collaborative studies with other organisations, whereby the use of animals such as sheep can also be used in research.

Will the institute stop using animals in research?

Strict legislation and ethical protocols guide animal research in Australia. The use of animals in research is governed under the Animal Welfare Act 2002, the Animal Welfare (Scientific Purposes) Regulations 2003, and the Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (8th Edition 2013).

Telethon Kids Institute must keep its licence to use animals for scientific purposes. The licence is issued and managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. These regulations state that all animal research activities must have Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) approval.

Applications to use animals in scientific research are assessed by the Telethon Kids Animal Ethics Committee (AEC). The AEC is a body of independent advisors that includes a veterinarian, a person committed to animal welfare, a community (lay) person never involved in use of animals for research, and an animal researcher.

These applications are highly scrutinised by the committee for their scientific and ethical justification, and researchers must:

- provide rigorous justification for the need to conduct animal research demonstrate that there is no possibility of using alternatives for their study;
- they also must use the lowest number of animals required to achieve valid data; and
- harm to animals is the minimum possible while positive welfare is maximised.

Will the institute stop using animals in research?

Animal experiments are just one method in biological and medical research used by the Institute. We also do research by using cells, tissues, people, and high-tech equipment. These are complementary methods that are used alongside animal research to answer different sorts of questions.

It is currently a challenge to develop non-animal methods to completely replace the use of animals in research. Where non-animal methods have been developed and validated, and are accepted by the regulatory authorities worldwide, then the Institute will use these in preference to the animal tests.

What is the ANZCCART Animals in Research Openness Agreement?

The Australian Openness Agreement is a voluntary pledge that can be signed by organisations wishing to demonstrate their commitment to greater transparency in the use of animals for research or teaching.

This agreement was developed by the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART), and its purpose is to assist Australian organisations that conduct, fund or are otherwise associated with the use of animals in research or teaching to promote openness and support well-informed public discussion. It also seeks to ensure that signatories are open about the use of these animals.

The Institute supports the four commitments of the Openness Agreement:

- Be open about our involvement in the use of animals in research.
- Enhance communications with the media and the public about the use of animals in research.
- Be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals.
- Report annually on our efforts to improve openness in our use of animals in research.

What is the cost to the animals?

The Animal Ethics Committee is required by law to ensure that the pain and distress of animals is the minimum possible and that the benefits derived from the use of animals are not outweighed by the likely harm to the animals.

How are the animals cared for?

Essential needs (food, water, and housing), stable temperature and humidity range, appropriate social groups, and appropriate enrichment are provided for animals. This allows them to express more natural behaviours and decreases the potential for detrimental mental or physical health effects that may result from the laboratory environment.

This may include providing shelters and nesting materials, group housing, toys, treat foods, chew sticks, human interaction for social species, and opportunities for foraging.

Specialised animal care technicians look after the animals daily, while dedicated veterinarians oversee the animals' physical and psychological health. The scientists who work with these animals are also closely engaged in their care. Researchers depend on robust and healthy animals to produce reliable results, so it is in everyone's best interest to provide the best care and environment possible. Everyone who works with laboratory animals has a responsibility to care for their well-being.

Australian law dictates that the physical, health, and behavioural needs of animals must be in accord with good practice and scientific knowledge.