1. Policy statement and scope

The Department of Youth Justice (DYJ) – the Department) works to ensure that its policies, programs and services are informed by rigorous and robust evidence. The Department therefore supports research and evaluation that strengthens evidence-informed decision making and contributes to effective policy and practice.

The participation of the Department in commissioned and collaborative research is designed to ensure that:

- research is relevant and managed in accordance with legal and administrative requirements
- Departmental risk is minimised
- risk to clients, staff or stakeholder safety is minimised
- research preserves the dignity of research participants
- the Department optimises its return on investment in research and the research contributes to Departmental goals, policy and priorities
- research meets community expectations and is conducted to high standards of ethical conduct and probity.

Support may be provided to research projects through in-kind assistance, such as providing access to data, clients and staff. Highly relevant research proposals may be considered for financial investment.

This policy applies to all DYJ staff and research organisations, student researchers, external researchers and evaluators who are undertaking or propose to undertake research or evaluation regarding DYJ sites, services, policies and programs. It also applies to research and evaluation related to services, programs, projects, policies, legislation, interventions, initiatives, and business processes undertaken or managed by DYJ.

2. Policy detail

This policy also aligns with provision regarding research as outlined in the Youth Justice Act 1992, Human Rights Act 2019 and the Right to Information Act 2009.

This policy also reflects Recommendation 67 of the Atkinson Report on Youth Justice. This includes a focus on a youth justice and youth crime prevention research agenda, partnerships with Universities, building research and evaluation capability of Government staff, youth justice specific conferences and publishing research and evaluation findings in a variety of formats suitable for different audiences.

When implementing this policy care and consideration must be given to cultural diversity, listening to the voice of the child/young person and how these aspects will be incorporated to achieve fidelity in research and evaluation undertakings and findings.

The elements of this policy are as follow:
2.1 Reporting on research and evaluation

2.1.1 The Executive Leadership Committee will ensure that strategic and key operational decisions are informed by evidence to support continual improvement of services, policies, programs and legislative reform that leads to improvement in child protection system outcomes.

2.1.2 Major Australian and international research and evaluation reports and findings, including those commissioned or sponsored by DYJ will be actively and systematically considered.

Where appropriate, the YJ Research team will provide:

- an assessment (or review) of the quality of the evidence made;
- a summary of the findings and recommendations of the evidence; and
- a management response to those findings drafted in consultation with Senior Executives, for consideration by the Chief Executive. Where the management response to the recommendations requires a change in practice by DYJ staff working directly with families, children and young people, it will incorporate any necessary recommended changes to policy and the translation, implementation and impact planning guide for operational staff, professional associations and those responsible for professional development of staff in the Department.

2.2 Conducting research and evaluation with DYJ clients, staff or data

2.2.1 This process is described in detail within the Conducting research in DYJ procedure, for researchers seeking to undertake research projects in or involving DYJ sites.

2.2.2 To encourage consistency and guide decision making around research and evaluation in DYJ sites, all proposed research and evaluations will be centrally coordinated and managed.

2.2.3 Research will only be undertaken in DYJ sites if it:

- does not conflict with DYJ policies
- will be conducted in a manner which is ethical, safe and respects the autonomy and rights of children and young people, staff and volunteers; and
- complies with the requirements set out in the Conducting research in DYJ procedure.

2.3 Building research and evaluation capacity and collaboration

2.3.1 DYJ will develop and promote the research and evaluation policy across DYJ and with partners for a shared commitment to conduct and apply research and evaluation that will inform policy, program and practice.

2.3.2 Partnerships between and among DYJ staff, researchers, educators, parents, families, other education institutions, business and community organisations will be fostered to address priority research and evaluation needs, and share approaches for connecting research and evaluation to policy and practice.

2.3.3 Individual and organisational capacity to access, use and conduct research will be developed to support DYJ’s research and evaluation culture and internal capacity building. Performance Reporting and Evaluation will oversee research applications and significant evaluations as well as promote a culture of evaluation and evidence-informed policy.

2.4 Approval process

2.4.1 Applications for research projects are assessed by the Department and final approval of all projects is at the discretion of the Chief Executive.
2.4.2 Research proposals are assessed on (but not restricted to) the following key attributes:

- quality of the proposed methodology
- identified alignment of research objectives with the Department's and/or service area's cross-cutting research priorities
- feasibility of the research
- capacity of the researcher/s to complete research as proposed
- operational impost and burden to the Department
- risks for clients, staff and Department identified and mitigated by researcher
- requests for in-kind and financial support (Departmental and other sources) are clearly articulated
- research presents value for money – including impost on Department
- ethical, legal, privacy and confidentiality implications are identified by the researcher
- ethical clearance proposed or obtained from an NHMRC registered HREC
- accompanying documents are included in proposal e.g. consent forms, participant information sheets, data collection instruments.

2.5 Research translation and implementation

Lead researchers/research teams of all approved projects will be required to complete a Translation and Implementation Plan. It is a priority for DYJ to ensure that research projects deliver outputs that engage decision-makers and increase the ability of research evidence to inform policy, program and practice decision making.

The relevance of the research projects to DYJ policy, program and practice strategic priorities and the potential for the research findings to assist the Department to achieve improved outcomes for young people, women and the broader community is central to research approval decision-making.

3. Roles and responsibilities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Authority/Responsibility for:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>Approval, Consent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research and Evaluation</td>
<td>Oversee DYJ research applications and significant evaluations. Provide advice and report on significant research and evaluation evidence to key decision-makers within DYJ. Provide support and quality assurance where feasible to DYJ staff initiating or reporting on research and evaluation. Foster partnerships where possible between and among DYJ staff, researchers, educators, parents, families, other education institutions, business and community organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Staff</td>
<td>Compliance with policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure

5. Purpose and scope

5.1 These procedures describe how the Department of Youth Justice (DYJ) will assess and approve the undertaking of research and evaluation with:

- the DYJ workforce
- families, children and young people under DYJ's care
- DYJ's administrative data.

5.2 This procedure applies to research carried out by research organisations, education providers, student researchers, independent researchers, DYJ employees and other individuals or external agencies who seek access to research participants in DYJ sites and/or administrative data held by the Department.

5.3 When implementing this procedure care and consideration must be given to cultural diversity, listening to the voice of the child/young person and how these aspects will be incorporated to achieve fidelity in research and evaluation undertakings and findings.

5.4 To encourage consistency and guide decision making around research and evaluation in DYJ sites, all proposed external research and evaluations will be centrally coordinated and managed.

5.5 These procedures are to be used in conjunction with the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research” regarding the design, review and conduct of research (https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/e72).

5.6 Research that involves surveys, observations or the evaluation of programs or practices by a current DYJ site leader, staff or students within their own or neighbouring sites as part of ‘normal business’ (e.g. implementing improvement strategies within plans, professional development, review and audit processes) do not require approval under this procedure. These can be directly approved by the individual principal, director or site manager.

6. Procedure detail

6.1 Applications to undertake research

6.1.1 Research projects require formal applications for approval

Applicants are required to submit a Research Application Form (RAF) which is reviewed against the DYJ Research Agenda and Project Register. Projects will only be considered and approved if a complete and high quality Research Application Form is submitted.

The format of and information required by the application form may be modified as required, subject to the approval of Research and Evaluation.

6.1.2 Review applications to conduct research

Applications will be reviewed by the YJ Research Team. Advice from other areas of the Department will be sought where relevant.

Reviews of applications will be made with reference to the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research” and applicable legislation and Departmental policies.
Reviews of applications will consider:

- the potential value of new information to be gained from the research;
- the workload required of DYJ, children and young people in participating;
- the potential risk for harm, discomfort or inconvenience to result from participating, including threats to privacy and confidentiality (refer to the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research” for definitions of types of harm, discomfort and inconvenience, and definitions).

Applications will be reviewed against the information requested within the application form. Applicants may be requested to supply further information if:

- the steps required of DYJ staff and/or participants for the research project to proceed are not clear;
- there is not a clear logic statement as to how the research will produce knowledge which will then lead to benefits for families, children and young people; and/or
- there is insufficient information to determine that the research proposed is necessary in the context of previous research (wherever possible, applications should include a summary of previous research, the quality of the evidence and the remaining gaps in the evidence).

DYJ will consider the terms of approval for a project issued by any recognised Human Research Ethics Committee. Notwithstanding approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee, DYJ may still determine not to approve a project or require additional conditions or modifications before the project may proceed.

6.1.3 Approval of applications to conduct research

Approval to conduct research in DYJ must be approved by the Chief Executive.

Please note: DYJ does not automatically approve projects that have received grant funding and/or ethics approval prior to the Department being engaged and the project being approved through the process outlined above. All projects are considered for approval through the process outlined above.

6.2 Conduct of research

6.2.1 Consent to participate in research

Consent (e.g., implied consent, opt-out consent), will be considered on a case by case basis with reference to the criteria set out in the “National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research”.

Participants and parents/guardians must be provided with sufficient information to enable informed consent. Consent documentation should include the project title, description of purpose, benefits to DYJ, description of research activities, expected duration of participation, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, statement about voluntary participation and withdrawal, description of foreseeable risks, separate consent for video/audio-taping, details of support in the case of stress or adverse effects, possible outcomes of the research and the likely form of publication of the research findings.

Where the research involves questions of a specific or sensitive nature, the consent documentation must clearly disclose this information.
6.2.2 The researcher must incorporate approaches that value cultural diversity, listening to the voice of the child/young person and how these aspects will be incorporated to achieve fidelity in research and evaluation undertakings and findings.

6.3 Research translation and implementation
Lead researchers/research teams of all approved projects will also be required to complete a Translation and Implementation Plan. Translation and Implementation planning will be informed by the Research Translation and Implementation Planning Guide, Investment Decision Support Tool and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Lens supported by the YJ Research Team who will coordinate and facilitate engagement with relevant internal stakeholders.

7. Roles and responsibilities

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Authority/Responsibility for</th>
<th>Sub Heading #</th>
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| Researcher                  | • To submit a research application in accordance with the requirements outlined in this procedure.  
                              | • To conduct research in a manner consistent with this procedure.                             | 2.1.1 - 2.1.3,  
                              |                                                                                             | 2.2.1 - 2.2.2,  
                              |                                                                                             | 2.3.1 - 2.3.2     |
| Principal Research          | • Manage the research approval process including the administration, coordination, liaison of externally and internally initiated research.  
                              | Engagement Officer                                                                              | 2.1.2 – 2.1.3,  
                              | • Assess whether research proposals meet the requirements outlined in the DYJ Conduct of Research procedure. | 2.2.1 – 2.2.2,  
                              | • Ensure that relevant Regional Executive Directors are advised of research projects that will impact on staff. | 2.3               |
| Chief Executive             | • Approval of research projects which require full, partial or nil funding from DYJ.            | 2.1.4           |
|                             | • Delegate consent to appropriate Regional Directors.                                           |                 |
8. Definitions and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research is defined as the creation of new knowledge or the use of existing knowledge in new, creative and systematic ways so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. (OECD, 2002) A studious inquiry or examination; especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, guide improvement in program effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programming. Programs include services, projects, policies, interventions, initiatives, business processes and activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key decision-makers</td>
<td>The Executive Director, Strategy and Delivery Performance, Regional Executive Directors and the Chief Executive.</td>
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9. Related documents

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related legislation</th>
<th>Youth Justice Act 1992</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights Act 2019</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Right to Information Act 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks</td>
<td>National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018)</td>
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<td>DYJ Research Agenda</td>
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<td>Related forms and templates</td>
<td>Research and Evaluation Agreement/Conditions of Approval to Conduct Research</td>
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<td>Translation, Implementation and Impact Planning Guide</td>
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10. Document control

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<td>Approval date</td>
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<td>Commencement date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitored by</td>
<td>The YJ Research Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review date</td>
<td>1 year from approval date</td>
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