

Ethics Committee

(September 2025)

Terms of Reference

Refer to HRC Act 1990 (Section 25).

Membership Composition

Section 26 of the HRC Act 1990 states:

1. *The members of the Ethics Committee shall comprise –*
 - (a) *The Chairperson of the Council or a member of the Council nominated from time to time by the Chairperson of the Council:*
 - (b) *Two persons to be appointed from time to time by the Council, both of whom shall have qualifications in science and one of whom shall be a member of the Council:*
 - (c) *Four other persons, not being members of the Council, to be appointed from time to time by the Council.*
2. *In appointing persons under subsection (1)(b) or subsection (1)(c) of this section, the Council shall have regard to the need among the members of the Ethics Committee for a diversity of knowledge and experience in relation to ethics, philosophy, law, theology, nursing, women's health, patient advocacy, and tikanga Māori.*
3. *The Ethics Committee shall from time to time appoint one of its members to be the chairperson of the Ethics Committee.*

In April 2024, Council moved to include the option of a co-Chairperson model wherein roles and responsibilities of one Chairperson may be split between two Committee members as elected by the Committee and noted by the Council (refer to Executive minutes April 2024).

Term of Office

The HRC Act 1990 did not specify term. Members are appointed on the same three plus three year basis as other committees (refer to HRC Council minutes November 1991).

Process for Appointment of Committee Members

The Committee Chair recommends a nominee for consideration by Council. The Chief Executive formally invites the proposed member recommended by the Committee and confirmed by Council (refer to Executive minutes August 1992).

HRC Ethics Committee sitting as an Appeals Committee

By written notice issued under s25(1)(h)(ii) of the Act on 24 September 2010, the Minister of Health authorised the HRC EC to undertake the additional function of considering appeals against decisions made by the Health and Disability Ethics Committees.

When hearing an appeal, the HRC EC may consult other persons and bodies pursuant to section 25(2) of the Act. Where the Chair or a quorum of HRC EC members believes there is insufficient expertise on the HRC EC to consider an appeal, the HRC EC will seek additional expert advice. Persons and bodies to be consulted under this provision will be identified by the Chair of the HRC EC in

consultation with the HRC EC in order to obtain advice appropriate to the matter under review.

The HRC EC will seek appropriate Māori expertise when hearing appeals raising issues of concern to Māori.

Current Membership	Date Appointed	End of Term	Expertise	Location
Associate Professor Josephine Johnston (1c) (Chair)	04.2024	04.2027	Ethics and Legal	Dunedin
Associate Professor Donna Cormack* (1c)	06.2021	06.2024	Māori Health research	Wellington
Reappointment	06.2024	06.2027		
Mr Nick Laing (1c)	02.2025	03.2028	Legal	Nelson
Dr Anna Ponnampalam (1b)	08.2023	08.2026	Biologist	Auckland
Dr Lifeng Zhou (1a)	02.2025	07.2025	Health research	Auckland
Associate Professor Riz Firestone (1b)	02.2025	10.2026	Health Research	Wellington

*Māori representatives

Secretary:	TBC
Quorum:	Four
Meetings per annum:	Three to four
Explanatory Notes	Ethics Committee review project grant applications from centres where ethics committees do not meet the required standards (refer to HRC Council minutes June 1991)
Reports to:	Council
Established by:	HRC

Act 1990 Reviewed:
Disbanded: