NSW Child Death Review Team

Research Framework

Updated November 2025

Ombudsman New South Wales

1 Introduction

The Child Death Review Team (**CDRT**) has statutory functions under the *Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993* to:

- undertake, alone or with others, research that aims to help prevent or reduce the likelihood of child deaths, and
- identify areas requiring further research by the CDRT or other agencies or persons.[1]

The CDRT is required to report publicly on its research at least every 3 years. The CDRT also reports on current and recently completed research projects in CDRT Annual Reports.

This CDRT Research Framework guides how the NSW Ombudsman (**NSWO**) administers the CDRT's research functions to achieve the CDRT's purpose of preventing or reducing the deaths of children in NSW.

The Research Framework:[2]

- guides how the CDRT prioritises, delivers and communicates research projects
- ensures consistency in the CDRT's approach to research
- ensures the CDRT's approach to research is equitable and inclusive
- supports collaboration with stakeholders in research projects
- aligns CDRT research projects with the CDRT Strategic Priorities 2025-2030.[3]

The CDRT Research Framework will be reviewed on a regular basis to align with the CDRT Strategic Priorities.

1 The Ombudsman has a related function for Part 6 reviewable deaths: s 36(1)(d) CS CRAMA: to undertake, alone or with others, research or other projects for the purpose of formulating strategies to reduce or remove risk factors associated with reviewable deaths that are preventable.

2 The NSWO has a related research function in reviewable deaths (s 36(1)(d) CS CRAMA), which should have due regard to the CDRT Research Framework.

3 CDRT Strategic Priorities 2025-2030, **cdrt.ombo.nsw.gov.au/strategic-priorities**.

2 Other relevant research

External researchers may seek NSW Register of Child Deaths (RCD) data or records from the NSWO.

These may be provided where the research project is undertaken for the purpose of helping to prevent or reduce the likelihood of child deaths in NSW.[4] The NSWO manages the provision of any RCD data/information under relevant legislation, and internal delegations, policies, and processes.

Consideration will also be given to the governance and potential publication of research by external researchers prior to release of data. The CDRT is required to report annually in its Annual Report on whether any information has been disclosed.[5]

The CDRT also monitors research by others in a range of areas/topics and engages with researchers as required, including to present research findings to CDRT members.

3 Purpose of CDRT research

The ultimate purpose of the CDRT research is to help prevent or reduce the likelihood of child deaths. Our research aims to achieve this by:

Expanding knowledge

Building understanding and creating new knowledge and insights about the issues surrounding child deaths, and identifying opportunities to prevent future child deaths.

Developing evidence-based recommendations

Translating research into meaningful, practical, data-driven recommendations to support changes in legislation, policies, practices or services to prevent or reduce the likelihood of future child deaths.

Raising awareness

Communicating research findings widely and to targeted audiences in an accessible way, to maximise impact and increase the likelihood of change.

4 s 34L(1)(b) CS CRAMA.

5 s 34F(2)(c)) CS CRAMA.

4 Principles underpinning CDRT's research

A set of key principles underpin and guide this Research Framework to help achieve its aims:

Robust and rigorous design

Use robust research methods that align with national research standards and that support research integrity.[6]

Apply an equity lens

Conduct research that can contribute to reducing inequities (including by focusing where appropriate and possible on over-represented groups), particularly where the inequity highlights potentially preventable deaths. Embed a commitment to equity at all stages of the research process including planning, design and sharing of findings.

Inclusive and strengths-based approach

Wherever possible and appropriate, actively engage with groups and populations that have been under-represented in research to ensure their perspectives are meaningfully represented and the research acknowledges their capacities and capabilities.

Foster collaboration with experts

Engage and consult with relevant experts and look for opportunities to collaborate where appropriate and possible, including allowing others to leverage our data and research to support further research that can also contribute to our purpose.

Timely and actionable insights

Research is conducted in an efficient, timely manner which produces impactful and usable insights, targets and engages with key decision-makers to influence change, and produces accessible public reports and recommendations.

6 **Codes and Guidelines | Australian Research Council**, including the **Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 | NHMRC (or later updates)** The National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) **Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities**, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (AIATSIS) **Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research**.

5 Research criteria

The CDRT uses the following criteria to help prioritise and determine its research projects:

1. Is the project significant and does it link to the objectives of the CDRT – to prevent and reduce deaths of children in NSW?

Considerations include:

- Does the register indicate a high number of deaths, a spike in a particular cause of death, and/or a particular lack of decrease in the rate of death?
- Is there a sentinel event that highlights a systemic issue?
- Is there a particular trend emerging from death reviews?
- Is there evidence of gaps in knowledge/ policy/legislation that presents a risk to children?
- Is there evidence for substantial morbidity and/or burden of disease, or 'near misses' that may contribute to future deaths, in addition to mortality data?
- Is there a particular societal stressor that may be impacting child deaths?
- Is there an issue that disproportionately impacts on over-represented groups?

2. Is the project timely? Will it add value and provide important information about this particular issue and inform prevention strategies?

Considerations include:

- Is any other agency or body already considering or researching the issue? If so, how would our work at this time add value?
- Are there developments in public policy (e.g. legislative review, government inquiry) that the project could directly contribute to and influence?
- Is there a body or agency that might be better placed to undertake the work – either alone, or jointly with the CDRT?

3. Is the project achievable?

Considerations include:

- Are resources available and if so, is this the best use of our time and funds?
- Is there opportunity for data linkage or to draw on existing data to gain greater insights more efficiently?
- Will the scope of the project allow delivery in a reasonable timeframe?

Following consultation with the CDRT, the Convener will approve a rolling research workplan outlining its proposed areas of research for the next 1-2 years to support a strategic approach. This may be updated as events and data change but will be reviewed at least annually.

6 Internal or External CDRT Research

Depending on the type and scope of the research project, the CDRT has various options for who conducts research for the CDRT.

Internal research

Research projects that are completed internally by NSWO staff, often based on data/information in the NSW Register of Child Deaths and NSWO records. Prior to commencement, NSWO staff will develop the research scope, any required risk mitigation and proposed budget using NSWO templates. These internal research projects may result in a cohort review in a biennial report.

External research

Research projects are commissioned by the CDRT from an external research partner or agency. The responsibilities of the NSWO, the CDRT and the external researcher(s) for the various elements of the research (e.g. defining the scope, designing the methodology, report publication) are set out in the contractual arrangements, as this may vary across projects.

Prior to commissioning, NSWO staff develop procurement and project documentation including research scope, any required risk mitigation and budget consistent with the NSWO templates and processes.

These external research projects may be reported in a stand alone report to Parliament.

Research that includes both an internal and external component will be considered external research, with the associated requirements.

7 Research governance

The model of research governance depends on the research approach described above (Section 6 – Internal or External CDRT Research):

Internal research

NSWO executive oversee and approve all stages of the research and reporting. NSWO staff report to CDRT meetings on the initiation and progress of any internal research project and provide draft research reports to the CDRT for comment. Following the CDRT's review, the Convenor approves any report prior to publication.

External research

NSWO executive and the CDRT Convenor, in consultation with members, oversee and approve all stages of the research. A working party or CDRT subcommittee may be set up specifically for a research project to provide guidance and expert advice on the project.

CDRT members may be involved in specific external research projects according to their interest, expertise, and capacity. This involvement may range from leading and/or overseeing a project, to providing guidance or general advice and assistance as part of a working party.

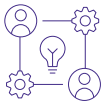
In addition, a Schedule linked to this Research Framework[7] outlines required elements for consideration when commissioning external research (including ethics approval, authorship, intellectual property (**IP**), peer review and secondary publication). The NSWO will propose responses to each item in the schedule for the CDRT's consideration prior to commissioning research. This enables these items to be included as necessary in any contractual arrangements.

NSWO staff report to CDRT meetings on the project's progress and provide draft research reports to the CDRT for comment. Following the CDRT's review, the Convenor approves any report prior to publication.

7 Schedule for CDRT Research Framework – Issues for consideration for externally commissioned research.

8 Research impact

The CDRT uses a range of strategies to ensure its research has the greatest impact to increase the likelihood of changes to support a reduction in child deaths:

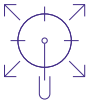


Engage with stakeholders early

We meet with relevant stakeholders to inform the development of research projects and support impactful research and recommendations.

Usable research

We target research to specific issues and make our findings available in easily-consumable formats.



Targeted, broad distribution

We communicate our research findings to key decision makers and research partners, including those in government agencies, the Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group (**ANZCDRPG**) and research institutions more broadly.

Promote data use

We share our research agenda with research institutions and encourage researcher use of the NSW Register of Child Deaths data in line with legislation.

Consult with stakeholders and monitor recommendations

We consult with agencies subject to draft recommendations and have ongoing communications and monitoring in relation to any recommendations in public research reports. We also seek to meet with groups directly involved in or impacted by research to discuss the findings and any recommendations to help prevent future child deaths.[8]

Post-project review

We conduct a review after each research project to consider the key achievements and insights as well as learnings for future projects.

8 This may involve the disclosure of information in relation to draft CDRT reports under 34L(1)(d) and (e).

Appendix Schedule for CDRT Research Framework

Issues for consideration for externally commissioned research

This Schedule is linked to the CDRT Research Framework (the Framework) and outlines elements which must be considered when commissioning external research.

The Framework provides that the NSWO will propose responses to each item in the schedule for the CDRT's consideration prior to commissioning research. This enables these items so to be included as necessary in any contractual arrangements.

Item	Description of consideration
Authorship of the published report	Authorship confers credit and implies responsibility for published research. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (**ICMJE**) provides a common definition for authorship.[9] Authorship should be specified prior to commissioning research and as part of contractual arrangements with external researchers.
Ethics approval	The CDRT does not require ethics approval to access records held for the purposes of its statutory functions to maintain a Register of Child Deaths, including using these records to conduct research under section 34(D) of the *Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 No 2*. However, receiving approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee (**HREC**) demonstrates a commitment to national research standards, provides legitimacy to research findings, and supports applications for peer review and publication in academic publications. Ethics approval can also delay research given associated preparation and approval timelines. Consideration on whether to seek ethics approval may depend on the topic, size or sensitivity of a specific research project. The Framework requires ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to be adhered to.[10] In addition, for any research project involving Aboriginal children and young people, consideration will also be given to receiving formal ethics approval (e.g. from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Committee).[11]

9 ICMJE, 'Defining the role of authors and contributors', **https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html** accessed 8 March 2024.

10 Including The National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) **Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities**, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (AIATSIS) **Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research**.

11 The Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Committee states that an application for ethics approval should be made for research for which any one of the following applies: The experience of Aboriginal people is an explicit focus of all or part of the research; Data collection is explicitly directed at Aboriginal peoples; Aboriginal peoples, as a group, are to be examined in the results; The information has an impact on one or more Aboriginal communities; Aboriginal health funds are a source of funding. **Submit an ethics Application – AH&MRC (ahmrc.org.au)**.

Item	Description of consideration
Governance	Research governance implements the principles, requirements and standards of research, including the protection of research participants, the safety and quality of research, privacy and confidentiality, financial probity, legal and regulatory matters, risk management and monitoring arrangements and promotes good research culture and practice.[12] The requirements for governance and use of the data, including governance requirements for external researchers, should be specified prior to commissioning research and as part of contractual arrangements with external researchers.
Intellectual property	Intellectual property (IP) relates to creations of the mind that can be legally owned and protected, including the subject matter, methods and tools created as part of the research.[13] IP ownership should be specified in the tender and contractual documentation with external researchers, noting that, as a general principle, IP for specific creations should be associated with the individual/organisation that conducted that specific research.
Peer review & academic publication	Peer review refers to the process of evaluating a research paper by experts in the same field to check the accuracy, relevance and significance of research prior to publication. Peer review, and publication in academic literature, can add rigour to research, expand the impact of its findings, and build the research credibility of the CDRT. Peer review and academic publication should be considered prior to commissioning research and specified as part of contractual arrangements with external researchers.
Secondary publication	Secondary publication refers to the publication of the same article as the primary publication for a different audience, including in a different journal or language. Secondary publication should be considered prior to commissioning research and specified as part of contractual arrangements with external researchers.

12 **NHMRC, Research Governance Handbook: Guidance for the national approach to single ethical review, December 2011**.

13 University of Melbourne, 'Understanding intellectual property for researchers', **https://research.unimelb.edu.au/commercialisation/researchers/protect-and-grow-your-idea/understanding-intellectual-property-for-researchers**, accessed 8 March 2024.

NSW Child Death Review Team

Phone
(02) 9286 1000

Toll free
1800 451 524 (outside Sydney Metro Area)

National Relay Service
1300 555 727 (ask for 1800 451 524)

Email
deathreviews@ombo.nsw.gov.au
info@ombo.nsw.gov.au

Website
cdrt.ombo.nsw.gov.au

NSW Child Death Review Team