



Importance of a National Laboratory Animal Resource Model

Position

The provision of animal research to meet the diverse healthcare needs in Australia and New Zealand is a vital and complex undertaking and until alternative models can completely replace animals in research, The Australian and New Zealand Laboratory Animal Association (ANZLAA) is calling for a national laboratory animal resource model and industry investment in:

1. An independent review to address the following:
 - o National consultation and engagement of the Animal Resources Centre (ARC) stakeholders
 - o Assess the impact on medical research and supporting industry by the proposed ARC decision
 - o Investigate strategies to ensure continuity of ethical animal supply operations under conditions of stringent quality control
 - o Ensure all decisions are made in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Code¹ and relevant state, territory and national legislation
2. Delivery of a nationally supported resource encompassing animal models, rodent and non-rodent with sustainable operations and funding source(s) to complement existing infrastructure, reduce animal wastage and eliminate continuity risks for the research community.

Industry Impacts

ANZLAA calls on The Western Australian and Federal Government to support the following critical components to ensure sustainability and excellence in the laboratory animal sector.

Well managed ethics and animal welfare, research quality & reproducibility through promotion of:

1. The 3Rs and best practice as a strategic driver of supply models nationwide
2. Efficient production of animals
3. High standards of animal welfare practices including minimising stress (via well managed transport, handling and, environment)
4. Effective quality control to prevent genetic drift and maintain high animal health status
5. Reproducible research outcomes meeting the NHMRC 'Best practice methodology in the use of animals for scientific purposes'

Transparent and sustainable operating models at a national level with particular consideration given to:

1. Not-for-profit models - recognising potential societal concerns arising from animal production incentivised through a for-profit business model
2. Sustainable subsidies where necessary to ensure animal production meets the ethical and quality control standards of the Code while remaining within the scope of the current research budgetary framework
3. Strategic human resource planning and talent acquisition of qualified staff (animal care, technical & veterinary)
4. Clearly identify financial, quality and operational risks assumed by research institutions as an alternative to a nationally managed production and services resource.

¹ The Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes Ed.8 2013

5. A suitability assessment of existing suppliers. Address risks associated with single provider reliance and limit 'disaster' occurrence impact and continuity risks.
6. Implement strategic targets and matched budget for 3Rs application - meeting the requirements of the Code is essential in all states and territories
7. Transparent national reporting on usage statistics - in response to long-standing demand from the broader community and to provide a better-informed foundation for future planning

Support those successful in securing federal and international grants through:

1. Implementation of a national resource model to mitigate risk of grant fund wastage relating to low quality animal production.
2. Ensuring continuity of existing grant-funded projects that will be impacted by the potential loss of animal supply from ARC commencing 2022.
3. Threats to future funding of animal-based research arising from:
 - Loss of key research activities in Australia & New Zealand essential for human, animal and environmental wellbeing eg COVID (and other) vaccine development
 - Diminished quality of animal research and negatively impacted reproducibility due to inconsistent animal production standards
 - Animal research moving offshore with potential welfare risk due to non-compliance with the Code
 - Publication capacity restricted if conduct of animal research does not meet peer expectations

Champion Public health, employment and industry by:

1. Minimising loss of industry expertise in current staff employed by ARC
2. Supporting training and development of new staff to future proof our industry
3. Address the impact on specialist small businesses providing goods and services essential to high quality animal research

Call to Action

The current timeline of the proposed closure of ARC and how our time is spent during this period is critical in ensuring that the right people have heard and understand the extent of the issues raised above as it impacts you. We, as the ANZLAA Executive and ANZLAA ARC Closure Steering Committee, strongly believe that the closure of ARC without a soundly researched and sustainable alternative will have a major negative impact on ethical and animal welfare standards in Australian biomedical research.

Strong investment and sound practices are critical to the development of an ethical and sustainable response to the proposed closure of ARC. We must ensure that we deliver this message clearly and as soon as possible to local and federal governments and/or directly to the WA Deputy Premier and Minister for Health; Medical Research; State Development, Jobs and Trade; Science.

A sample letter is attached and we support the use of this template as a guide for individuals, organisations and institutions to demonstrate the impacts of the intended closure of the ARC affecting your work. We also encourage you to engage your research colleagues and stakeholders to contribute to such a letter or send their own customised version.

About ANZLAA

ANZLAA was formed in 2006 from an amalgamation of three organisations with a history extending back 30 years. The membership of ANZLAA covers the full spectrum of professional expertise relating to the care and welfare of animals used in research in Australia and New Zealand. This includes the provision of daily animal care, technical skill, veterinary support, ethics, regulatory management, training and the supply of equipment and services.

Through supporting a range of activities, ANZLAA aims to promote communication, informed discussion and continuing education among its members as well as the broader community in pursuit of improved animal welfare.

Enquiries can be addressed to President@anzlaa.org.au