



**Massey University**

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

**Human Ethics Chairs Committee**

**Annual Report**

**1 January – 31 December 2015**



**Massey University**

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

## **Human Ethics Chairs Committee**

### **Annual Report 2015**

#### **1. Terms of Reference**

The Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee was established:

- 1.3.1 To advise the Academic Board of any matters brought to the attention of the Committee concerning the responsible conduct of research;
- 1.3.2 To consult with the University community on the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and recommend changes as necessary;
- 1.3.3 To determine issues which need to be addressed in educational programmes for staff and students;
- 1.3.4 To ensure that appropriate education is provided for all Committee Members;
- 1.3.5 To ensure that each of the Human Ethics Committees operates in an equivalent manner;
- 1.3.6 To review and audit the procedures of the Human Ethics Committees;
- 1.3.7 To review complaints about the performance or the decision-making processes of the Human Ethics Committees;
- 1.3.8 To monitor the Terms of Reference of the Human Ethics Committees, including the Procedures for Nomination and Selection of Academic Members, Procedures for Nomination and Selection of Community Members, Human Ethics Committees Membership Declaration, Human Ethics Committees Reconsideration Procedures, Human Ethics Committees Complaints Procedures, Human Ethics Committees Guidelines for Annual Report, and recommend changes as necessary;
- 1.3.9 To monitor the Human Ethics website and Application/Notification documentation and make changes as necessary;
- 1.3.10 To report to the Health Research Council on behalf of all Human Ethics Committees.  
**(AB10/115)**

## 2. Membership

In 2015 the Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee (HECC) had the following membership:

- Dr Brian Finch, Chair, (1 February 2015 – 31 December 2015);
- Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (1 January – 31 December 2015);
- Mr Jeremy Hubbard, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A (1 January – 31 December 2015)
- Prof Julie Boddy, Interim Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B (1 January (1 January – 31 July 2015)
- Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B (1 August – 31 December 2015)
- Secretary: Ms Patsy Broad, Team Leader, Research Ethics;
- In attendance: Mrs Alice Lindsay, Committee Administrator, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern.

## 3. Meetings

The Massey University HECC met on two occasions (May and December) in 2015.

Human Ethics Committee Chairs have met with various academic programme and research groups on all three campuses to provide advice and guidance on the development of ethics protocols.

## 4. Revision of Documentation

### 4.1 Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants

As was the case in previous years in 2015 revision of the Code remained suspended, pending revision of the University's Code of Responsible Research Conduct and migration to the online ethics application process. The process for revision of the Code commenced in early 2016 and is currently ongoing.

### 4.2 Ethics Online Submissions

During 2015, research ethics at Massey University migrated to an online environment for low risk notifications and full ethics applications. Researchers, whose responses to a series of screening questions indicate that a project is minimal/low risk, submit a low risk notification online and receive an immediate email response noting acceptance.

In order to check the robustness of the low risk submissions, twice-yearly audits of low risk notifications are undertaken by the Human Ethics Chairs Committee. Researchers are provided with guidance if any discrepancies are found. Two audits were undertaken in 2015. On the whole the HECC found the system to be sound. A small number of researchers have been provided with guidance following review of the notifications.

The Human Ethics Chairs Committee is currently developing Terms of Reference for the audit of low risk notifications in order to ensure the process for audit is transparent and the robustness of the system is maintained.

Researchers whose responses to the initial screening questions indicate a project is more high risk in nature are prompted to continue with the submission of a full application through the online module.

#### **4.3 Website**

Minor changes were made to pages on the website in order to reflect the new submission process and changes in committee membership.

## **5. Professional Development**

### **5.1 Members of Chairs Committee**

The professional development of members was assisted through the circulation of various articles from current journals and attendance of the Chair and two members at a national 'Ethics in Practice' conference at the University of Otago in May 2015.

### **5.2 Members of Committees**

A section for educational issues was included in the Agendas of the three Human Ethics Committees. Educational issues arising from the review of applications were addressed and articles on the ethics of research were distributed and discussed on a regular basis.

Members were advised of relevant externally-run conferences and seminars as notice came to hand.

Members were offered training in the new online submission process with an emphasis on how applications would now be received and reviewed.

A Workshop for all committee members was held in November 2015. Session topics covered "Ethical thinking" which focused on thinking beyond personal bias and applying

principles in the light of context, consequences and risk; “Research involving children”; ‘Who owns the data in a changing landscape of research?’ and a Chairs Q&A session. The sessions were very well-received and the day was attended by most members of Massey University’s three human ethics committees.

## 6. Changes in Membership of Human Ethics Committees

Type of Appointment	New Appointments	Second term Appointments	Resignations	Completion of term
<b>Northern</b>				
Academic	0	0	0	0
Community	2	0	1	0
Vice-Chancellor’s nominee	0	0	0	0
<b>Southern A</b>				
Academic	3	0	0	1
Community	2	2	1	1
Vice-Chancellor’s nominee	1	1	0	0
<b>Southern B</b>				
Academic	3	0	1	0
Community	2	2	1	0
Vice-Chancellor’s nominee	0	0	1	1

There has been ongoing difficulty in recruiting both academic and community members which results in additional workload for the Secretariat and potential challenges to Committee continuity.

## 7. Staff Training Seminars

Ethics 1 Seminar (“Undertaking Research with Human Participants”) twice through video-links to each campus and training sessions in the new online submission process were offered for supervisors and research students.

The members of HECC provided workshops and presentations to research clusters of staff on request throughout the year at all three regional campuses.

## 8. Student seminars

Training sessions in the new online submission process were offered at all three campuses.

Special lectures and seminars were provided to various student classes by Chairs of Human Ethics Committees and the Director at the three regional campuses, as requested.

## 9. Equivalence between Committees

Chairs frequently shared non-routine enquiries and draft replies were circulated to all members for comment.

Consistency of approach between the three committees was reviewed at the HECC meeting and monitored through the circulation of minutes to all HEC chairs.

## 10. Research involving Māori

No applications were received in Te Reo Māori.

Recording of Māori centred research was introduced during 2005. In 2015, 14 applications were received.

Year	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Total
2010	4	9	8	21
2011	6	5	9	20
2012	4	9	8	21
2013	3	14	12	29
2014	2	12	5	19
2015	3	5	6	14

Discussion regarding the establishment of an HRC accredited Te Reo Māori HEC was placed on-hold in 2014. In 2015 the committee confirmed this position due to lower numbers of Te Reo Māori speaking staff and lack of clarity about demand for such a committee. The Chairs Committee remains open to further discussion regarding the establishment of such a committee.

## 11. Research conducted overseas

To permit Massey University researchers to comply with Federal funding conditions in the USA, the Research Ethics Office maintains Federal Wide Assurance approval [FWA00011672] and Institutional Review Board status [IRB00006014] for Human Ethics Committee Southern A. The AVC Research, Academic & Enterprise; Team Leader, Research Ethics and Chairperson of Human Ethics Committee Southern A have completed the online Human Subject Assurance Training required by the Office for Human Research Protections, of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

## **12. Standard Operating Procedures**

In 2015 the Research Ethics Office and the Director, Risk and Assurance agreed that responsibility for venepuncture and cannulation certification would be passed to the Schools using these procedures in research, under the overview of the Director, Risk and Assurance.

Following approval, where necessary the Research Ethics Office refers applicants to the University Risk Manager and/or Insurance Officer for advice.

## **13. Research Transferred to Massey University**

In 2015, three notifications of research with prior ethical approval were received.

## **14. Monitoring of Research**

Staff are reminded every six months of the requirements of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants in a memorandum and email to Massey University Heads and Secretaries.

Any enquiry about a piece of research that had either been approved by a Committee or was on the low risk database acted as a trigger to review the complete file for that research.

In order to ensure adherence to HDEC procedures and accurate reporting of figures in this annual report, the Research Ethics Office must be named and provide sign-off as a sponsor for research that requires the approval of an HDEC. Whilst guidelines are provided to researchers on the MUHEC website and details have been circulated to researchers it appears that the Research Ethics Office is still not being included as a sponsor on some research submitted to an HDEC.

An audit of a doctoral thesis manuscript was carried out in a case where the examination version of the thesis was officially embargoed due to the sensitive information it contained. Because the examiners considered that there was valuable scholarship in the thesis, a manuscript version was derived for public consumption, described as 'a manuscript drawn from a doctoral thesis'. This process enabled the ethical concerns about the potential for harm to participants and researcher which were agreed on during the ethical review, to be managed appropriately in the dissemination phase.

## **15. Complaints/Reconsideration**

In 2015 the Human Ethics Chairs Committee received a formal request for reconsideration of a committee decision by an applicant. The Director, Research Ethics and Chairs of the two non-

affected Human Ethics Committees convened to review the request in accordance with Reconsideration Procedures. In this instance the request by the applicant was upheld.

While not received as a formal complaint the Research Ethics Office was contacted by a participant in an HDEC approved study. The discrepancy between the approved application and the participant's experience were explored with the researcher and Head of Academic Unit in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures for HDECs (Section 12, paragraph 213). In this case the Director, Research Ethics deemed the discrepancy constituted a protocol deviation confined to one participant and the applicant agreed to use the HDEC process for notification of minor amendments (SOP for HDECs, Section 12, paragraph 217).

## 16. Applications to Human Ethics Committees

### 16.1 Summary of Applications

#### a) By Month

Month	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
February	6	5	6	17
March	5	11	10	26
April	8	6	7	21
May	8	9	8	25
June	6	9	8	23
July	5	8	8	21
August	6	7	7	20
September	2	5	7	14
October	7	7	6	20
November	8	5	4	17
December	9	4	8	21
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>225</b>

#### b) By College

College	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Business	6	1	8	15
Health	15	37	4	56
Humanities & Social Sciences	45	29	61	135
Sciences	3	9	5	17
Creative Arts	0	0	0	0
Administration	1	0	1	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>225</b>



c) **By Project Type**

Project Type	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Student Research	51	53	54	158
Staff Research	19	23	25	67
Teaching	0	0	0	0
Evaluation	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>225</b>

d) **By Outcome**

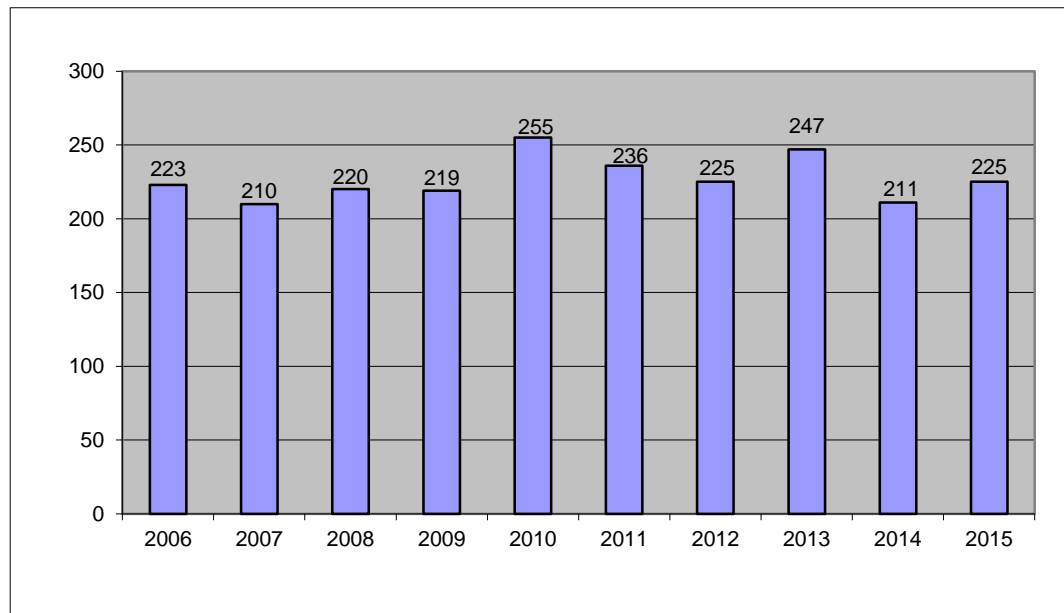
Decision**	Northern	Southern A	Southern B	Totals
Unconditionally Approved	6	5	2	13
Provisionally Approved	52	63	75	190
Approval Deferred	8	8	2	18
Approval Declined	1	0	0	1
Referred	0	0	0	0
Other	*3	0	0	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>225</b>

\* 3 applications withdrawn prior to review.

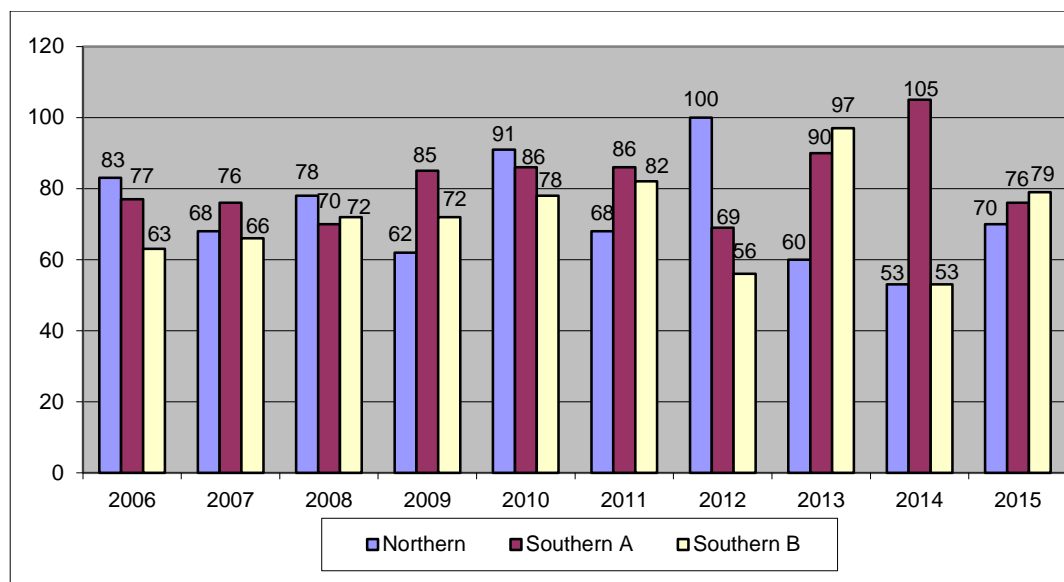
\*\* Initial decision only. Deferred applications, if not withdrawn by the researcher, are re-presented for review at a subsequent monthly meeting.

16.2 **Summary of Trends**

a) **Total Number of Applications Reviewed from 2006 to 2015**



b) **Total Number of Applications Reviewed by Committees from 2006 to 2015**



## 17. Research Recorded as Low Risk

Delegation of decision-making to researchers for projects identified as low risk was introduced in 2003. Researchers are required to notify in advance such research to the Research Ethics Office.

### 17.1 Summary of Low Risk Notifications

a) **By Campus**

Year	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Total
2006	80	213	22	315
2007	75	192	67	334
2008	107	217	121	445
2009	91	230	100	421
2010	117	265	70	452
2011	113	246	80	439
2012	103	254	85	442
2013	120	256	92	468
2014	167	288	89	544
2015	174	341	77	592

b) **By College**

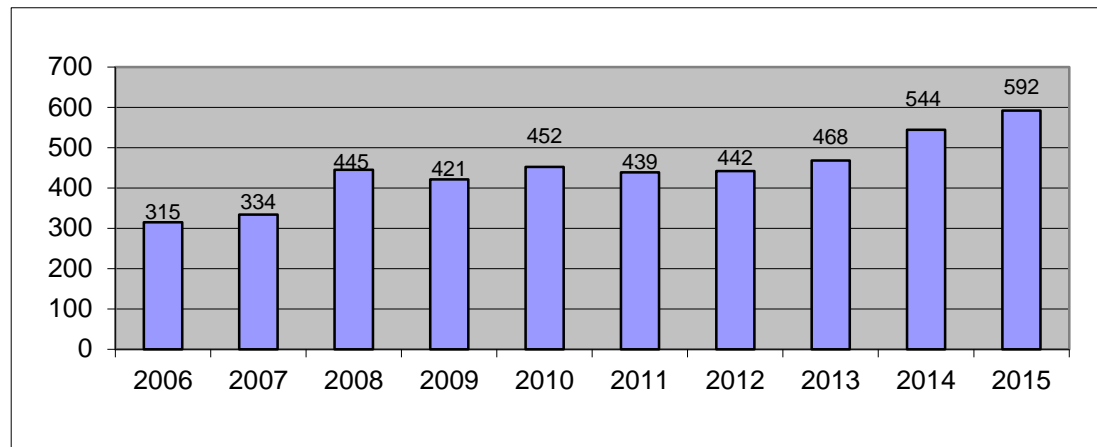
College	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Business	62	77	22	161
Health	37	42	7	86
Humanities & Social Sciences	43	140	24	207
Sciences	31	81	0	112
Creative Arts	0	0	24	24
Administration	1	1	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>592</b>

c) **By Project Type**

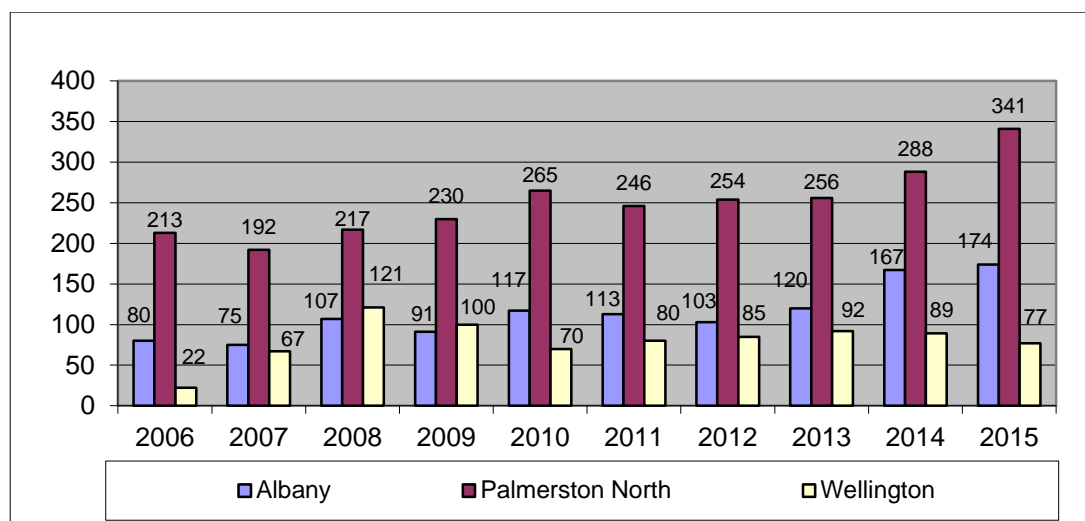
Project Type	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Student Research	139	246	43	428
Staff Research	34	91	30	155
Teaching	0	3	3	6
Evaluation	1	0	0	1
Other	0	1	1	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>592</b>

17.2 **Summary of Trends**

a) **Total Number of Notifications Received from 2006 to 2015**



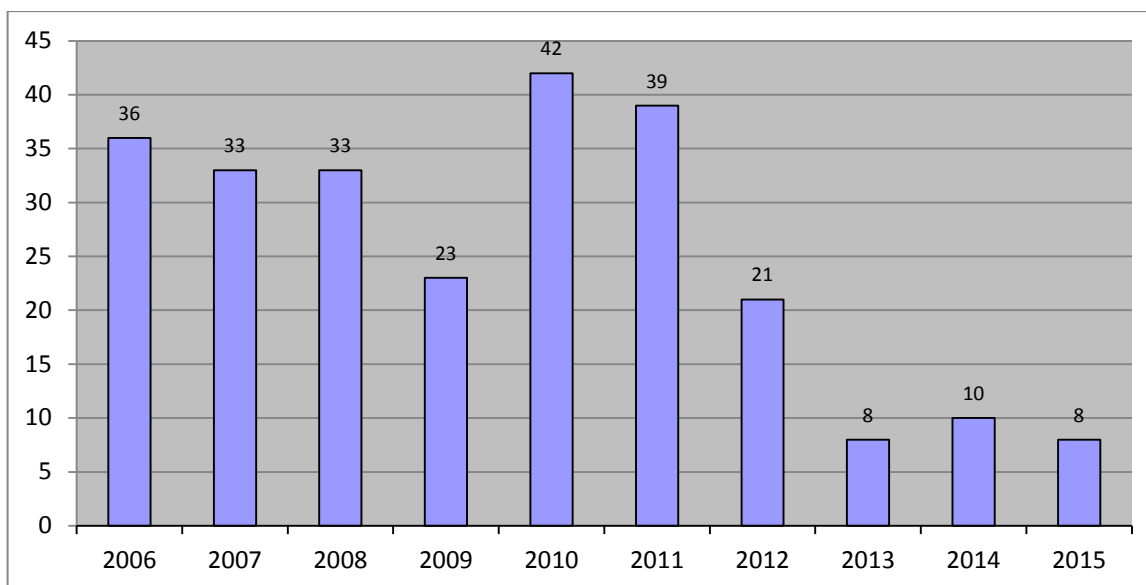
**b) Total Number of Notifications Received by Campus from 2006 to 2015**



## 18. Research Requiring Approval by an HDEC

In 2012 the Ministry of Health reduced the scope of ethical review undertaken by Health and Disability Ethics Committees and introduced an online application form. Since that time the number of notifications the Research Ethics Office receives about HDEC applications has dropped and the number of health focused applications received for consideration by MUHECs has increased.

The 2013 - 2015 columns in the graph below, and the summary figures in Section 20 of this report, should be treated with caution as it is still unclear whether all Massey researchers applying to HDEC notify the Research Ethics Office. The HECC is actively working with Research Directors within the Colleges of Health and Science in order to ensure researchers are aware of their obligations when applying to an HDEC and to ensure that the Research Ethics Office is notified as a sponsor of all research reviewed by an HDEC.



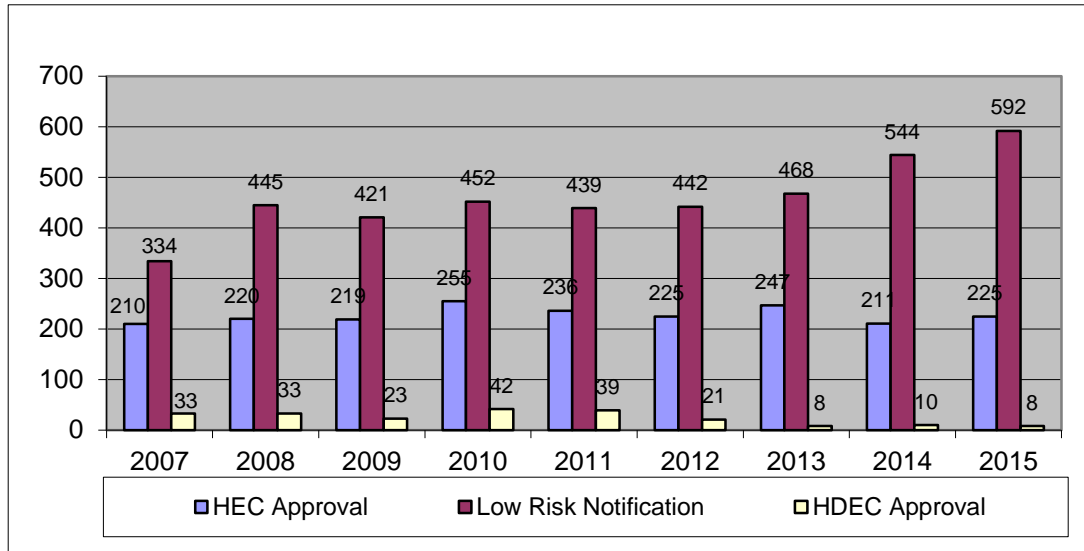
## 19. Overview

### 19.1 By Campus

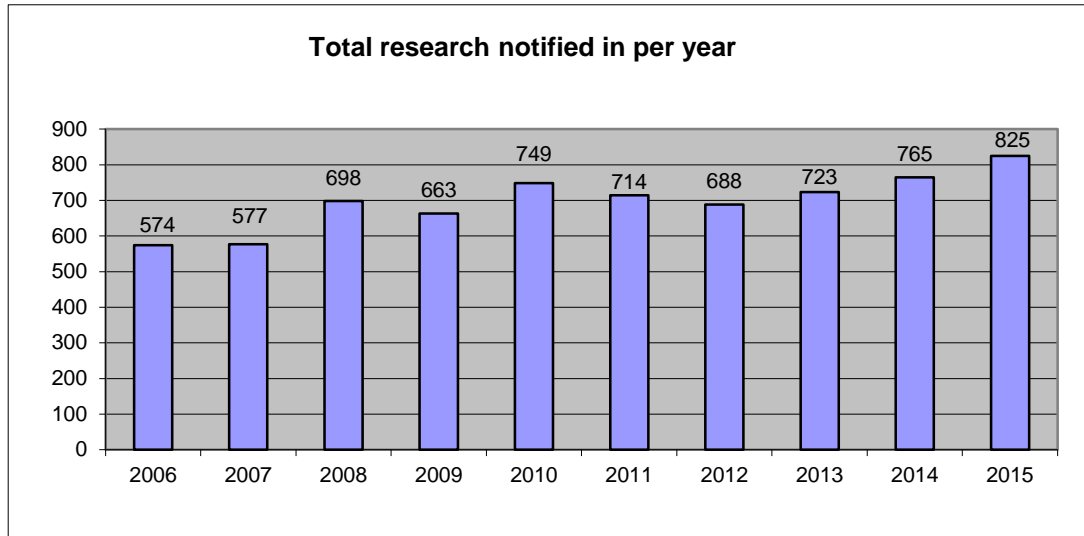
Project Type	Albany	Palmerston North	Wellington	Totals
Approvals***	78	113	34	<b>225</b>
Notifications	174	341	77	<b>592</b>
HDEC Notifications	3	2	3	<b>8</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>825</b>

\*\*\* Figures by campus differ from those reviewed by committee to allow for applications reviewed by HEC: Southern A due to the need for approval by a committee with medical expertise; and to ensure balancing of workflow across the Secretariat. Further adjustment will be seen in 2016 due to the ease with which applications can be allocated to another committee, thus reducing the wait-time of researchers during peak periods.

**19.2 Comparison of HEC Applications, Low Risk Notifications and research requiring HDEC Approval**



**19.3 Total number of HEC Applications, Low Risk Notifications and research requiring HDEC Approval by year**



## 20. Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Chairs and the members of the three committees for their dedication and service to the University. I wish to thank staff of the Research Ethics Office at Albany and Palmerston North for their professionalism, commitment and client-centred approach over the last twelve months.

This period has seen a number of significant changes to office processes and procedures (e.g. from assessment to audit of Low Risk Notifications; the development of an on-line application and workflow management system). I am grateful to Patsy Broad, Miralie-Thomas Vincent, and Alice Lindsay for their professionalism in supporting these innovations while keeping existing systems running smoothly. In particular, I would like to thank Patsy Broad for her willingness to accept the Team Leader role and ensuring that the Office team functioned well. On behalf of the HECC, I wish to acknowledge the continuing support from Research Operations, through Dr Michael Millan and Dr Jo Innes and from the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Research, Academic & Enterprise), Professor Brigid Heywood and Linda Palmer for capably managing the interregnum.



Dr Brian Finch  
**Director, Research Ethics**  
**Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Chairs Committee**  
**30 May 2016**