**CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY**
Ellengowan Drive, Darwin, Northern Territory, 0909
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# All research projects require a Plain Language (Participant Information) Statement

The purpose of the Plain Language Statement (PLS) is to explain the research project, what will be asked of research participants, and to outline what safeguards are in place for them. The form should be succinct, written in plain language, and provide sufficient detail to enable a potential participant to make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

The material below provides a guide only. It outlines what is required, however researchers should tailor or add information to suit their project. Where the research is being conducted in partnership with another agency, the guidelines of that agency relating to participant information should be combined with these guidelines.

A single PLS is usually sufficient for most projects. However more complex projects may involve groups of participants, for example, school students and teachers, service providers and clients, where differing inputs are sought. In such circumstances, more than one PLS will be needed.

The PLS should be on **LETTERHEAD** and appropriately branded, ie., the full details of the organisation(s) conducting the research are displayed.

## The PLS/Information sheet

An advice statement – **"This is yours to keep"** should appear at the top of the page just below the words "Plain Language Statement".

**Project title**: insert the title of the project (using bold type)

**Researcher:** Insert the personal title, name, academic qualification and section/branch/organisation of the principal researcher.

If you are a **student**, insert your personal title, name, and your course of study. If there are associate supervisors, give the personal title, name, qualification, School and University or parent agency, of the assistants.

**Project aim(s):** insert the aim(s) of the research

**Benefits of the Project**: Briefly describe the benefits of the research to the participants and/or to the field of study. The benefits should be realistic and reflect the level and complexity of the proposed research.

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General outline of the Project: Provide a brief overview of the project methodology. Indicate how and from whom the data will be collected; explain how the data will be collected, analysed and presented, and if intending to do so, how the results will be shared with participants.

Participant involvement: Describe what the participants will be asked to do, for example, complete a survey questionnaire, undertake an interview, participate in a focus group and/or permit access to personal records. For interviews and focus groups and similar methodologies, identify how the data will be recorded. If data are recorded by note taking or by video/tape recorder and then transcribed for analysis, indicate what will happen to a participant's data should that participant decide to withdraw from the project.

The place of data collection, the number of occasions that participants will be required and the approximate time commitment involved needs to be clearly indicated.
Identify:

- The ***voluntary*** nature of the project
- That a participant can withdraw at any time *without* explanation or penalty
- That a participant can decline to answer a question

Indicate what if any remuneration will be given. Where relevant, identify what this is, how it will be provided and repeat the information in the consent form.

Exclusion criteria: if relevant, detail the reasons that would exclude potential participants from the project.

Confidentiality: Indicate whether anyone but the identified researchers will have access to the data provided by the participants

Anonymity: Indicate whether the anonymity of the participants is to be preserved, and if so, how this will be done.

Data storage: Indicate where the data will be stored and how security of personal information will maintained during collection, analysis and writing up of results. This should be succinct but in sufficient detail for participants to understand.

Participants should also be informed where the data will be stored once the project is complete. Normally this will be at the host institution that accepts responsibility for the research for a period of five years. Different locations and longer periods may apply if the research is conducted with other agencies. Identify what will happen to the data at the end of the storage period.

Human ethics clearance: Include a statement that the project has been approved by the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee. If the project has gained approval from other ethics committees or authorities, include a statement to that effect that identifies the relevant bodies.

Concerns or complaints: Include information whereby participants can raise queries about the project. Requests for further information or queries about the project should be directed to the Principal Investigator. Provide name and contact details.

Concerns regarding ethical conduct must be directed to the Ethics Committee. The following mandatory statement is required at the end of the PLS:

If you have any questions or concerns that you do not want to direct to the researcher, you are invited to contact the Ethics team of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee on (08) 89466063, on the toll free number, 1800 466 215 or by email, ethics@cdu.edu.au.

The Ethics team can pass on any concerns to appropriate officers within the University.

The information required in a PLS can be expressed clearly and succinctly. Examples are provided at: https://www.cdu.edu.au/research/ori/human-ethics

## Consent Form

The guiding principle for consent is that any agreement to participate is voluntary and based on information that is sufficient, clear and unambiguous. The Consent Form provides evidence of an agreement between the research and the participant on the conditions, rights and obligations of both parties to conduct the research according to your project plan. Substantiation of informed consent can take several forms. It is most often given by signing a consent form but under certain circumstances, consent may be given orally. Consent may also be given implicitly, for example by completion of a survey.

The Consent form should accurately reflect each proposed intervention for which participant permission is sought, e.g., the proposed level of confidentiality, the right to say no or to withdraw without explanation etc. Any payment or that no payment will be provided should be made clear.

In a more detailed consent, for example, where permission to take photographs or record videos is sought or when seeking to use the data for future research, a 'tick all that apply' or Yes/No option may be helpful.

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Further essential information is the research institution, project title, and name of the researcher(s), including any additional partners or agencies involved, as well as a statement of acknowledgement by participants that they have read the Plain Language Statement, and understand the nature of their involvement and have had an opportunity to ask questions.

For more information, please refer to National Statement Chapter 2.2.