Plain Language Statement / Information Sheet

Developing an informative plain language statement takes time...

A plain language statement (PLS) or information sheet is the first impression that potential participants gain about your research project. It should be written as an invitation that speaks directly to potential participants in a manner that sufficiently describes your project and the nature of participation. The PLS or information sheet needs to be written in clear, straightforward language, with no specialist terms/jargon. It should convey a concise overview of the nature of your project clearly detailing what is being asked of participants so that consent is sufficiently informed and voluntary.

A clear, succinct (normally one to two pages is sufficient) PLS will contain the following information:

- The project title and who is conducting the research
- A brief statement of the aim(s) of the project:
  - What you are asking of participants for example, if using interviews, the number, duration of and location for the interview(s) must be clear to participants.
  - What data will be collected, how it will be used (to inform policy, publication, conference proceedings etc.), and how it will be recorded e.g. use of voice, videos, photos, whether de-identified or in identifiable form.
  - A statement regarding how confidentiality and anonymity will be addressed; how data obtained will be stored and later disposed of in accordance with NHMRC requirements.
  - Any benefits associated with the project and to whom these benefits will accrue.
  - The voluntary nature of participation, i.e. the right to say no, also the right to withdraw at any time including what will happen to any data already collected.
  - Any actual or potential risk factors should be identified and appropriately addressed including the provision of contact details of relevant support agencies.
  - From where participants can locate a summary of results should they so wish.

A final proof reading is essential to ensure that there are no ‘typos’, grammatical or factual errors. Wherever possible, the PLS should be on the letterhead of the responsible institution.

The Contact details of the researcher must be provided at the bottom of the PLS and including those of the supervisor (where appropriate) and the Contact details of the Ethics team-HREC, CDU Human Research Ethics Committee (see statement below).

PERSONS TO CONTACT:
If you have any questions about the project, please contact the researcher, ______________ on ph:__________________ or email_________________________________.

CDU-HREC CONTACT WORDING AND DETAILS:
If you have any concerns about this project, you are invited to contact the Ethics team of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee by email: ethics@cdu.edu.au, phone 08 8946 6498 or mail: Research Office, Charles Darwin University, Darwin NT 0909. The Ethics team can pass on any concerns to appropriate officers within the University.
**Consent Forms**

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 researcher 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. See National Statement Chapter 2.2 for further information.

**It is essential that all participants:**

- Have received an adequate explanation of any anticipated risks, discomforts or inconvenience arising from their participation, including any special risks involved (e.g. mandatory reporting).
- Understand participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time, including the withdrawal of any data provided (where practicable, and/or up to analysis of data, or, publication).
- Agree to the method of data collection (e.g. audio-taping, observation, and video-taping) and are satisfied that any information they have provided is confidential and protected, subject to any legal limitations and that, unless otherwise elected, they will not be identified in any publication arising from the research.

**A consent form should provide the following essential information:**

- The research institution, project title, and name of the researcher(s), including any additional partners or agencies involved.
- A statement of acknowledgment 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.
- A concise description of the data collection method(s) to be used (tick box options can be used).
- A statement that relates to confidentiality and anonymity in instances where confidentiality cannot be assured, e.g. in focus groups, this should be clearly stated.