

Cover Letter

RE: Australian Urban Health Indicators project application for linked health data

To the NSW Population and Health Services Research Ethics Committee (PHSREC)

Dear Committee,

We are seeking approval from your committee to access linked, deidentified unit record health data from CHeReL for the Heat Health Vulnerability case study.

The Australian Urban Health Indicators project (AusUrb-HI) is a joint initiative between federally funded National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) organisations such as the Population Health Research Network (PHRN), the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) and the Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN).

Through this collaboration, the project aims to facilitate access to deidentified unit record level data on population health, to be integrated with socio-economic, demographic, environmental and built environment data to generate a new and improved understanding of vulnerability to extreme heat, as well as the complex relationship between human health and the urban morphology. The AURIN team will demonstrate the complex relationship between human health and the urban environment via the Heat Health Vulnerability Index pilot case study, comprising the five most populous cities and towns in the state of New South Wales.

Having access to linked, deidentified unit record health data will allow the AusUrb-HI project to develop a novel Heat Vulnerability Index that would inform policy changes and city planning decisions that could ultimately save the lives of thousands of Australians. Incorporating linked, deidentified unit record health data is a crucial part in providing a nuanced Heat Health Vulnerability Index.

The project is led by national experts such as Professor David Preen, Chair in Public Health at the School of Population and Global Health at the University of Western Australia (UWA), and Associated Professor Melanie Davern, Director of the Australian Urban Observatory and Acting Deputy Director at the Centre for Urban Research at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT). Professor Louisa Jorm, Director of the Centre for Big Data Research in Health at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney is part of the project's advisory committee.

In light of the unfolding climate crisis and the threat posed by extreme heat events to human health, urgent action is needed through evidence-based policies and decisions. Several organisations, including the Greater Cities Commission in NSW and the City of Melbourne's Department of Climate Change and City Resilience, have expressed their interest and support for the Heat Vulnerability case study. These organisations are interested in disseminating findings via community workshops to draw research translation and solutions to mitigate heat vulnerability at community level, as well as to expand the project to other cities in Australia at a future stage.

The application for PHSREC is sent via REGIS platform and includes the following documents:

- List documents included with the application:
 - Human Research Ethics Application (HREA)
 - Combined Protocol Application for Data
 - NSW Privacy Form
 - Data Variables list
 - Data Custodian Approval
 - CHeReL Technical Feasibility Email
 - CVs of all listed Investigators
 - Independent peer review report



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