

## Storage and disposal of data

Data collected in the course of research approved by the DHS HREC must be retained for a period of at least **7 years** in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973*. However, the data retention period may be longer for certain types of research. For example, clinical trial data should be retained for a period of at least **15 years** (*Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice in Australia (1991)*), while health data collected in relation to minors must be retained until the individual attains the age of 25 (*Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*).

It is the responsibility of the Principal Researcher to ensure that all data collected during the project are stored and disposed of securely following the seven-year data retention period.

Researchers are required to inform the Committee about the location where data will be stored and who will have access to the data. They must also provide a detailed account of the security arrangements in place to protect individuals' privacy and confidentiality. In addition, a clear statement of the method of destruction must be provided.

Researchers must bear in mind that data cannot be retained indefinitely for use in future research unless participants have been advised of this and have consented to the use of their data in additional research. It is important to consider the need to use data collected in future research and make the necessary arrangements with the Ethics Committee when initially submitting the application, as well as with participants when recruiting them.