## **CASE STUDY**

## **Overarching communication plan for the ISLAND project**

The ISLAND project is an ongoing cohort project that aims to establish the infrastructure and capacity for dementia prevention research across Tasmania. It is sponsored by the University of Tasmania’s Wicking Dementia Centre. The ISLAND project aims to develop, provide, and assess the effectiveness of nested interventions (including educational programs and cognitive assessment processes) to reduce the risk of dementia in the Tasmanian community. The project aimed to recruit more than 20 000 older Tasmanians to the cohort. Cohort members are made aware of specific studies that they may be interested in participating in. These studies may be observational or interventional in nature.

As part of the strategy for keeping such a large number of participants engaged in a long-term cohort study, the overarching ISLAND project team distribute monthly cohort newsletters, as well as study teams sending participants any available study results such as published papers or abstracts. Early in the planning process, the ISLAND project team approached the ethical review body to discuss how these communications would be approved. The agreed approach was to differentiate between *research* and *general* communications.

* Communication materials used for study recruitment, participant instructions and information relating to the collection of information for research purposes are considered *research communications* and require pre-approval from the relevant HREC.
* Communications aimed to maximise cohort engagement, such as notifications about upcoming studies, being involved with the longitudinal ISLAND program and/or reporting emerging findings are considered *general communications*. General communications will not need to be HREC-approved, but will be guided by the National Standard and will specifically avoid any coercive, discriminatory or otherwise potentially offensive sentiment or language. These general communications will be submitted to the HREC with the Annual Progress Report for their awareness.

Opportunities to participate in ISLAND-related research are promoted by the ISLAND team to the ISLAND cohort. These general communication materials are to raise awareness that a study is recruiting and will direct interested ISLAND cohort members to the ethics-approved study and recruitment information.

Communication with participants drawn from the ISLAND cohort into specific studies will be subject to relevant HREC approvals for those studies and will be the responsibility of the principal investigator(s) on the relevant HREC-approved documentation.

The high engagement of the ISLAND cohort in specific studies is viewed as due to the strong focus on both in-person and online communications. Being able to distinguish between *research* and *general* communication has provided useful clarity for what approvals team members need to seek.