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PROMOTING, ENHANCING AND PROTECTING THE RESEARCH PROFESSION SINCE 1955

THE BUSINESS OF RESEARCH EDITION

The AMSRS Code and the use of incentives

Market and social research companies sometimes offer an incentive to participants who take part in a project. This may take various forms – for example a small incentive given at the time of interview, or participation in a prize draw on completion of fieldwork.

An AMSRS guideline on the use of incentives in market or social research projects is currently being developed and will be available later this year.

It will remind researchers of their responsibilities when offering incentives to participants. Among other things, they must ensure that any incentive complies with the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour (the Code).

Compliance areas are summarised here:
An incentive must comply with any

relevant legislation (Rule 1). If the incentive takes the form of a lottery or game of chance, it must comply with the legislation in the states or territories where it is being conducted. An AMSRS fact sheet: Market and social research and trade promotion lotteries, is available to help, as each state and territory has different requirements. For example, a permit may be required or certain goods may not be allowed as prizes.

The participant must not be harmed or adversely affected as a result of receiving or using the incentive (Rule 8). For example, if the incentive is a price discount on a product and the participant has to spend more money to get the benefit, the participant may be regarded as being adversely affected.

No commercial activity or selling can be linked (or perceived to be linked) to the incentive (Rule 9). The client's products or

services must not be used as incentives as this provides a selling opportunity for the client from the research project. This contravenes the Code as it links the research with the marketing of a client's products or services.

Participants' anonymity must not be compromised as a result of receiving the incentive (Rule 10). That is, if they provide personal details as part of the incentive process, these must not be passed on to the client without permission from participants.

This is a summary of researchers' responsibilities - the detailed guideline will be available later this year on the AMSRS website.

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JANE GREGORY,
AMSRS PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS OFFICER

