JOHN PLUNKETT CENTRE
FOR ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE

REPORT 1989 - 1993
JOHN PLUNKETT CENTRE
FOR ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE
INTRODUCTIONS

The John Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care was formally established in 1992 with the signing of a Memorandum of Association between Australian Catholic University and St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney. In this first Report, the history of the development of the centre is outlined and its goals, objectives and activities are summarised. I wish to pay tribute to all those who contributed to the establishment of the centre.

The importance of such a centre, based within Catholic traditions and values, is self-evident in this period in which rapid technological advances in health care are accompanied by economic and community pressures on those who have to make the difficult decisions.

The centre provides a forum for the consideration of complex ethical issues faced by health care practitioners. It facilitates research into the ethical aspects of emerging problems. It offers educational programmes, including workshops and conferences, and in the near future will conduct formal graduate courses in ethics.

I congratulate the Director, Dr Bernadette Tobin, and the centre staff on the quality of the contribution they have already made and look forward with confidence to the expansion of the work of the centre in the coming year.

Professor Muredach Dynan
Principal, New South Wales Division,
Australian Catholic University

St Vincent’s is the principal religious teaching-hospital in New South Wales. The Sisters of Charity have long recognised the need for an ethics centre at St Vincent’s Hospital. Though the hospital has had a strong operational Bioethics Committee for over ten years, it has felt the need for a centre to undertake research into the ethical aspects of health care: technological advances in medicine often seem to have outstripped the capacity of law, theology and ethics to deal with resulting dilemmas.

With the creation of the Australian Catholic University an opportunity arose for an important affiliation between that institution and St Vincent’s Hospital. Out of this has come the creation, on the St Vincent’s Campus, of the John Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care as a joint venture between the two institutions.

Dr Ron Spencer
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent’s Hospital
JOHN HUBERT PLUNKETT
1802 - 1869

John Hubert Plunkett was the first Catholic Solicitor-General and then the first Catholic Attorney-General of New South Wales. He was, at various times, a member of both the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. He was a member of the first Senate of the University of Sydney and an early Vice-Chancellor of that University. He was the first Chairman of the Board of Education of New South Wales and a founding fellow of St. John's College. Most important, he was a great friend and benefactor of the Sisters of Charity in Australia.

Plunkett was born in Roscommon in Ireland in June, 1802. He studied Arts at Trinity College in Dublin and, in 1823, went to the Irish Bar. In 1830 he was appointed Solicitor-General in New South Wales. In 1836, he became Attorney-General, a remarkable thing for an Irishman and a Catholic. As chief law officer, Plunkett made an important contribution to the slow and difficult process by which the penal colony of New South Wales developed the institutions of a free society.

Plunkett was a leader in establishing civil rights in Australia. He drafted the Magistrate’s Act which abolished summary punishment, the administration of justice by private householders and the excessive use of the lash. He argued successfully for the abolition of convict assignment. He secured jury rights for emancipists. He extended the protection of the law to convicts and assigned servants and, after securing the conviction of seven white men for the killing of an aborigine at Myall Creek in 1838 (in a massacre in which a whole tribe was killed), he extended the protection of the law for the first time to aborigines. But as a Catholic who knew what emancipation meant, Plunkett himself considered the Church Act of 1836 which dis-established the Church of England his most important single achievement.

When the Sisters of Charity arrived in Sydney from Ireland in 1838, John Plunkett’s special interest in their affairs led him to organize a public appeal to establish their first hospital in Sydney. He then helped them to acquire the narrow strip of land along Victoria Street in Darlinghurst to which the first St. Vincent’s Hospital, which had opened its doors at Potts Point, was relocated in 1870.

Plunkett’s two great recreations were the violin and Irish folk music. He died in May 1869 and was buried in Sydney’s Devonshire Street cemetery.

Thousands of Australians, of every religious belief and of none, have experienced the first-class health care that is inspired by the Sisters of Charity. Others have been educated by the Sisters. There are thus many Australians with reason to be grateful for the kind and practical help which John Hubert Plunkett gave to the women who founded the Sisters of Charity in Australia.
MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the John Plunkett Centre is to examine the ethical aspects of contemporary practices in health care and, by research, education and consultation, to contribute a Catholic perspective to public discussions about what constitutes good conduct and wise choices in health care.

The goals of the John Plunkett Centre are:

1. to conduct research into the ethical and theological aspects of health care and to contribute from a Catholic perspective to the development of standards and practices in health care;

2. to inform health care professionals of ethical and theological principles;

3. to facilitate association between the University, the Hospital, other universities and health care institutions in matters pertaining to ethics;

4. to provide advice, assistance and service in the field of ethics to the University and the Hospital;

5. to co-operate with other centres in relevant fields especially any ethics centres which may be established within other Divisions of the University; and

6. to seek and raise funds from Government, industry and community sources for research and related activities.
HISTORY OF THE CENTRE

The origins of the John Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care lie in the activities of Muredach Dynan who was at the time the Deputy-Principal of Catholic College of Education Sydney. With the help of several Religious Congregations in Sydney, he established the Centre for Studies in Bioethics at the Catholic College. The Centre's activities were co-ordinated first by Br Brian Grenier cf (in 1988) and then by Mr Chris Rigby (from 1989 until 1991). Able administrative assistance was provided first by Ms Suzanna Davis and then by Ms Heather Curry.

In its early days, the centre concentrated on the education of health care professionals. By 1991, however, the focus of activities became the undertaking of research into the ethical, theological, economic and legal aspects of the provision of health care. This change of focus coincided with the full-time appointment of Dr Bernadette Tobin (an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow) and the part time appointment of Mr John Quilter, a Lecturer in Philosophy at Australian Catholic University and Ms Colleen Leathley, a part-time research associate whose appointment was supported by the Sisters of St Joseph and St Margaret’s Hospital.

In 1991, at the invitation of the Sisters of Charity and the Board of St Vincent’s, the centre moved from a room at the North Sydney Campus of Australian Catholic University to a terrace house on the Darlinghurst Campus of the hospital. At the suggestion of Fr Edmund Campion, the centre was officially named in honour of John Hubert Plunkett. The change of location to Darlinghurst enabled the staff of the centre to be located together for the first time and to take part in the day to day activities of a teaching hospital. In 1991 Mr Rigby was appointed to the position of Executive Director of the Australian Catholic Health Care Association. Dr Gerald Gleeson, a philosopher from the Catholic Institute of Sydney at Manly, agreed to take on the position of Co-Ordinator of the centre for one year on a part-time basis.

In 1992, the Senate of Australian Catholic University formally established the John Plunkett Centre as its first research centre and the University and the hospital signed a Memorandum of Association formally establishing the centre as a joint venture. In 1993 Dr Bernadette Tobin was appointed the Foundation Director of the centre and Mrs Barbara Reen became its Administrative Assistant.
STAFF AT THE CENTRE: 1993

Bernadette Tobin: MA (Melb), MEd (Melb), PhD (Cantab). Dr Tobin is the Foundation Director of the centre. She has taught philosophy at the University of Melbourne, the University of Wollongong and at campuses of Australian Catholic University in Melbourne and Sydney. She was the Inaugural Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Australian Catholic University (New South Wales) and was an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow from 1991 to 1993.

Gerald Gleeson: STB, MA (Cantab), PhD (Leuven). Dr Gleeson is a part-time research associate at the centre. He studied philosophy and theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney (Manly) where he now teaches philosophy and Christian ethics. He is a priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

John Quilter: BA (Syd), MA (Pitt). Mr Quilter is a part-time research associate at the centre and a Lecturer in Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. He is currently completing his PhD.

Keith Joseph: MA (Macc). Mr Joseph is a part-time research associate at the centre where his research centres on justice in the allocation of health care resources. His doctoral thesis is on the ethics of human genetic engineering.

Barbara Reen: MA (Syd), Dip.Ed. (UNE). Mrs Reen is the centre's Administrative Assistant. She has taught in secondary schools in New South Wales and has worked in an administrative capacity at the University of New South Wales in both the Australian Graduate School of Management and the Public Sector Research Centre.

(Left to Right) Mr John Quilter, Mrs Barbara Reen, Dr Gerald Gleeson, Dr Bernadette Tobin, Mr Keith Joseph
In 1992 the Senate of Australian Catholic University decided to make the John Plunkett Centre its first research centre, and the University and St Vincent's Hospital signed a Memorandum of Association which made the centre a joint venture of the two institutions. This gave public recognition and status to a centre of activity in research, education and consultation in the ethics of health care which had already been operating for several years.

The first issue of Bioethics Outlook, the centre's quarterly publication, had been issued in June 1990. In 1991, the centre conducted four public seminars: at St Vincent's on euthanasia; at Calvary Hospital in Kogarah on AIDS; at the Mater Hospital in North Sydney on informed consent, and at St Margaret's Hospital in Darlinghurst on the care of anencephalic infants. Mr Rigby, the centre's Co-Ordinator, had been a member of the Ethics Committee at Royal Prince Alfred from early 1990 and of the Bioethics Committee at St Vincent's from 1991. For several years Mr Rigby (and later Dr Tobin) taught ethics in undergraduate courses at the then Catholic College of Education Sydney. At the end of 1990 Dr Tobin was awarded an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to develop a virtues-based approach to medical ethics.

When the centre was relocated to the Darlinghurst campus of St Vincent's Hospital and became a joint venture of Australian Catholic University and St Vincent's, its activities were reorganized. The focus shifted from undergraduate education to research. In addition to the research interests of individual staff, the centre developed two joint projects: justice in the allocation of resources and the role of a Catholic health care facility in a secular and pluralist society.

The centre's proximity to a teaching hospital has had two main advantages: it affords clinicians the opportunity to use the centre as a resource in their deliberations on the difficult ethical issues in their clinical practice and it encourages the staff of the centre to take part in the institutional life of the hospital. The centre has gradually become an additional locus of activities of the Department of Philosophy and Theology of Australian Catholic University.

Staff take part in a variety of educational activities. They have undertaken consultations for a range of institutions: the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Anglican Homes of Peace, the Central Sydney Palliative Care Service, the Ethics Committee of Calvary Hospital in Canberra, the Sisters of Charity Health Services Council.
The centre has run a series of public seminars: 'Resource Allocation: the ethical issues' (in October 1992); 'What Should Patients Be Told? The Duty to Inform and Advise' (June 1993); 'Withdrawing Nutrition and Hydration from Patients who are in a 'persistently vegetative state': is it euthanasia?' (August, 1993). In addition, the centre hosts a seminar programme in philosophy to which academics from other universities and health care institutions are invited to attend and contribute.

Since 1992 a monthly 'ethics workshop' has been held in the Social Work Department of the hospital. Each month a social worker presents a case for discussion by other social workers together with a member of the John Plunkett Centre. Topics discussed have included 'Not for Resuscitation' orders; Transplantation: opting in and opting out; the care of severely brain-injured patients; consent to treatment; psychiatric patients with HIV.

Members of the centre serve on a variety of committees. Dr Tobin is a member of the Bioethics Committee at St Vincent's Hospital; the Research Committee at Sacred Heart Hospice; the Medico-Moral-Scientific Committee at St Margaret’s Hospital; the Philippa Brazill Foundation; the Archdiocesan Working Party on Euthanasia; and she is a Lay Member of the NSW Medical Board. Dr Gleeson is a member of the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Medicine of UNSW; the Ethics Committee of the Disability Resources Association; the Bioethics Committee of St Vincent’s Hospital; the Research Ethics Committee of St Vincent’s Hospital; the Archdiocesan Working Party on Euthanasia; and the Research Ethics Committee at Sydney University. Mr Quilter has been a member of the Australian Catholic Bishops Committee on Justice, Development and Peace which developed the document entitled 'Commonwealth, Common Good'.

The centre has been host to two overseas visitors (Ms Angela Rossetti of the Boston University Overseas Study Programme from February to April in 1992, and Fr Phillip Hammett, SJ the President Elect of the European Conference of Jesuit Provincials from June to September in 1993). In addition, the following students studying philosophy within a Bachelor of Arts degree at Australian Catholic University have undertaken a 'practicum' at the centre: Mr Robert Geale, Mr Hugo Avila, Ms Louise Hoskins, Ms Anna Rigney (June-August 1992) and Ms Leila Barretta and Mr Pierre Cunliffe (June-August, 1993).

The activities of the centre are supervised by a Management Committee composed of three people from Australian Catholic University (Professor Muredach Dyman, Professor Pam Joyce, Dr Pat Malone) and three from St Vincent’s (Dr Ron Spencer, Professor Reg Lord, Professor Peter Brooks), a representative of the Sisters of Charity (Sr Jennifer Fahey) and the Director, Dr Bernadette Tobin.
In 1993 the Academic Board of Australian Catholic University approved the introduction of a Graduate Certificate in Ethics (Health Care) and a Master of Arts in Applied Ethics (Health Care). These courses were developed with the help of Dr Robert Gascoigne and Dr Patricia Malone of Australian Catholic University together with several external consultants from philosophy, law and medicine. We anticipate the first students will start their studies in these two courses in 1994.

Finally, the centre has been helped enormously by generous donations from St Margaret’s Hospital, Sacred Heart Hospice and the Catholic Health Care Association of New South Wales.

Bernadette Tobin
April, 1994
VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Research

The Centre's first priority is the writing and publishing of research in the ethics of health care. Justice in the allocation of health care resources, the care and treatment of people who are in a 'persistently vegetative state', informed consent, the role of a Catholic hospital in a pluralist society, co-operation between Catholic and secular health care institutions, medical end-of-life decisions, the introduction of Casemix and Diagnosis Related Groups into the financing and accounting of Australian hospitals: the ethical aspects of these and other issues are the focus of our research.

Education

In the next few years the staff at the Centre will be involved in the teaching of a Graduate Certificate in Health Care Ethics and a Master of Arts in Applied Ethics (Health Care). In addition we look forward to supervising doctoral students whose research will be devoted to the ethics of health care. We shall continue to organize public seminars and to ensure that they are marked by philosophical depth as well as clinical relevance. We shall continue to publish the proceedings of our seminars and in the future we hope to take these seminars to country locations in New South Wales. We shall continue to take part in workshops, seminars and conferences sponsored by other groups of health care professionals. In 1994, we hope to offer our first Intensive Bioethics Course over a weekend in the middle of the year.

Consultancies

The services of the Centre will continue to be available both to individuals (in particular, those working within St Vincent's Hospital and Australian Catholic University) and to other institutions.
Gleeson, G.P. Ethical Issues of Casemix, *Proceedings of the first Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar* (Sydney, St Vincent’s Hospital, 1992), 79-81.
Gleeson, G.P. Ethical and Theological Commentary, *Proceedings of the first Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar* (Sydney, St Vincent’s Hospital, 1992), 114-118.
Quilter, J.G. The Influence of Ethics in Nursing Practice, *Proceedings of the first Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar* (Sydney, St Vincent’s Hospital, 1992), 20-35.
Quilter, J.G. Nursing Ethics: a New Challenge, *Proceedings of the first Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar* (Sydney, St Vincent’s Hospital, 1992), 82-91.
Tobin, B.M. Practical Wisdom and Health Care: an account of the contribution of Virtues Ethics to the Practice of Medicine and Nursing, Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, (University of New South Wales Press, 1992).
Tobin B.M. Theories of Ethical Truth, Proceedings of the first Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar (Sydney, St Vincent’s Hospital, 1992).
PRESENTATIONS: 1992-1993

Gleeson, G.P. Panel discussion on Organ Transplantation, Transplantation Association Conference, Canberra, April, 1992.
Gleeson, G.P. “Dying with Dignity”, Second Annual Ethics in Nursing Seminar, St Vincent’s Hospital, September 1993.
Quilter, J.G. “AIDS Education”, Religious Education Department Colloquium, Australian Catholic University, April, 1992.
Quilter, J.G. “Ethics in Accident and Emergency Nursing”, Accident and Emergency Unit, St. Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, June, 1992.
Quilter, J.G. Invited Speaker for two sessions, Ethics in Nursing Practice Conference, St. Vincent’s Hospital, September, 1992.
Quilter, J.G. “Ethics in Accident and Emergency & Casualty”, Accident and Emergency Unit, St. Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, October, 1992.
Tobin, B.M.  “Not for Resuscitation Orders: Medical Grand Rounds, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney (Co-presentation with Mr John Quilter), February, 1992.
Tobin, B.M.  “Ethical Reasoning”: Seminar on Bioethics and Nursing Practice, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, March 1992.
Tobin, B.M.  “Age as a criterion for rationing health care”, Aged Care Seminar, Eastern Area Health Service, War Memorial Hospital, August 1992.
Tobin, B.M.  “Aspects of Palliative Care”, Presentation at the Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, September 1992.
Tobin, B.M.  Member of Panel, Youth Suicide Prevention Conference, National Youth Foundation, Sydney, September 1992.


Tobin, B.M. “Mental Health in the Community: How do we know we are doing the right thing?”, Eastern Area Mental Health Service, Caritas, Sydney, September, 1993.

Tobin, B.M. “Decision-Making in Health Care: Ethical Aspects”, 2nd Annual Ethics in Nursing Practice Seminar, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, September, 1993.


Tobin, B.M. “Do the employees of the Sisters of Charity Health Service believe the mission and philosophy can be maintained in a business world?”, Sisters of Charity Health Service Council Seminar, Surfers Paradise, October, 1993.

Tobin, B.M. “Are there any good arguments for rationing health care by age?”, Special interest group, Sisters of Charity Health Service Council Seminar, Surfers Paradise, October, 1993.


Tobin, B.M. “A non-legislative attempt to regulate the care of patients who are seriously ill”, International Conference on Medical Ethics, Beijing, China.


Tobin, B.M., Invited panelist: Reflections on the achievements of the International Conference on Medical Ethics, November, Beijing, China.

# FINANCIAL REPORT BUDGET AND REPORT 1993
## BUDGET 1994

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## EXPENDITURE:

### (a) Salary & On-costs

| Total Salary & On-costs          | 122,328     | 125,178     | 140,580     |

### (b) Non-salary costs

| Conferences & Travel            | 6,500       | 11,450      | 9,200       |
| Consumables                     | 3,550       | 3,957       | 2,060       |
| Equipment Purchase & Maintenance| 5,000       | 8,298       | 8,880       |
| Library                         | 7,000       | 4,806       | 7,270       |
| Services                        | 15,350      | 12,872      | 18,105      |
| **Total Non-Salary Costs**      | **37,400**  | **41,383**  | **45,315**  |

| **Total Expenses**              | **159,728** | **166,561** | **185,895** |

| Operating Profit for the Year   | 0           | 14,210      | 0           |