

Director's Report: Renewal and Consolidation

This marks the sixth year of operations of the Queensland Bioethics Centre as a partnership between the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and the Australian Catholic University. I am very pleased to confirm that it is a partnership that will continue, with the Archdiocese and ACU renewing their agreement for another three years to December 2026. I am very grateful to Archbishop Mark Coleridge and to all our financial supporters, including the Bishops of Queensland, Mater Misericordiae Ltd, St Vincent's Health Australia, and Southern Cross Care QLD. Without this support, most of the achievements of the QBC that I am pleased to report on this year would not have been possible.



In accordance with the agreements that govern the QBC, our staff have contributed to appropriate formal teaching at ACU, including in healthcare ethics, Catholic sexual ethics, and moral theology. Some of our doctoral students have also tutored in ACU's core curriculum. Both I and the Mater Senior Lecturer in Health Care Ethics, Dr Bridget Pratt, have contributed to professional development in healthcare settings, such as Mater, St Vincent's, and ACU's Mission Leadership Program. There are currently two students in the Master of Theological Studies Bioethics Specialisation. We encourage our stakeholders to consider whether this might be right for members of their organisations to help to build bioethics capacity in the Catholic health and aged care sector.

Research success continues to grow. From October 2022 to September 2023, there were nine new peer-reviewed publications in high-quality journals on topics including palliative care workers' concerns about voluntary assisted dying, the role of conscience in healthcare, community engagement in biomedical research, integrating environmental justice into healthcare planning, epistemic injustice, and social justice in global health research, among others.

Dr Pratt's success in obtaining a Wellcome Trust grant last year has also meant that the QBC has been able to recruit a new post-doctoral researcher. Dr Jae-Eun Noh joined the QBC in September and will be working for two years with Dr Pratt on understandings of solidarity in global health ethics.

The four HDR students associated with the centre are making good progress, including successful confirmation of candidature seminars, and presentations at significant international conferences. Irene Jao and Dr Ademola Fayemi presented their work at the Oxford Global Health conference and Lachlan Green presented his work at gerontology conferences at the Gold Coast and in New Zealand. Geetanjali Rogers presented at the Association of Practical Theology in Oceania conference. We are grateful to ACU for supporting some of the costs associated with this.

In the realm of engagements, I have been reappointed for a second term by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity to the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. I also continue to serve on the Australian Health Ethics Committee, the Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand (PSANZ) Ethics committee, and the University of Queensland Ethics Committee, and chair the writing group charged with updating the Catholic Health Australia Code of Ethical Standards. I represent ACU as chair of Working Group 1 on Vulnerability and Healthcare for the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities. In 2024 we will be launching a doctoral research collaboration with doctoral candidates from each of the member universities.

Dr Pratt is similarly engaged in clinical and human research ethics committees at Mater and is a member of the UK National Health Research Institute's Health Research Community Engagement and Involvement Advisory Network. She is vice chair of Health Systems Global thematic working group on health systems research ethics and is a member of the International Common Disease Alliance Equity Working Group.

I was part of an ACU-sponsored panel on Resource Allocation, hosted by *The Tablet*, and part of a webinar panel for PSANZ on Moral Uncertainty in prenatal screening. I conducted workshops for the CHA Board and the Anglican Bishops of Australia. Dr Pratt and I conducted a workshop for delegates to the Australasian International Breast Conference.

Media engagements included my interview for ABC God Forbid episode on the Dignity of Work in the context of AI, and an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald* about DISHBrain. In the public policy

space, I made a submission to Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs on Human Rights (Children Born Alive Protection) Bill 2022.

This has been a year of growth and consolidation for the QBC. With the ongoing help of our supporters, we expect this to continue in the next three years.

David G. Kirchhoffer
Brisbane, 30 September 2023