

# Director's Report: Recognised Achievement

The Queensland Bioethics Centre continues to provide a valuable service to the community through its research, teaching, and engagement on bioethical issues and related topics. Testament to this is QBC's consistent production of high-quality research outputs, appointments of its staff to impactful roles on external committees, and progression of its doctoral researchers. The following provides an overview of achievements from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024.

It is truly wonderful to be able to celebrate the promotion of Dr Bridget Pratt to the level of Associate Professor this year. Bridget is the Mater Associate Professor of Healthcare Ethics and her promotion is clearly deserved: she was named in the 2024 Stanford University / Elsevier Top 2% of scientists list, including being in the top 100 researchers in applied ethics worldwide. This is a remarkable achievement.

In accordance with the agreements that govern the QBC, our staff have contributed to appropriate formal teaching at ACU. Some of our doctoral students have also tutored in ACU's core curriculum. Both I and Associate Professor Bridget Pratt, have contributed to professional development in healthcare settings, such as Mater, St Vincent's, and ACU's Ministry Leadership Program. The Master of Theological Studies Bioethics Specialisation is an important way to build future bioethics capacity and forms part of a scalable suite of offerings from ACU that can be tailored to stakeholders' needs. I continue to 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, together with the possibility of progressing on to doctoral studies and targeted research collaborations.

Regarding research outputs, from October 2023 to September 2024, there were four new peer-reviewed publications in high-quality journals on topics including physician assisted suicide, global health justice during COVID-19, the ethical challenges facing health systems recovering from the impacts of COVID-19, and the environmental ethical responsibilities of health systems. Special mention goes to one of the doctoral students I am supervising, Geetanjali Rogers, who published her first academic article in the *American Journal of Bioethics*. Ademola Fayemi, another of our doctoral students, was awarded a travel scholarship by the International Association of Bioethics to attend the World Congress on Bioethics in Qatar and was able to accompany Bridget Pratt to the Oxford Global Health Ethics conference and the Utrecht Global Health Ethics Summer school thanks to a successful application by Bridget Pratt and colleagues at Utrecht for an Erasmus+ Teaching Mobility Grant.

Areas of ongoing research include: epistemic justice in global health ethics, social and environmental justice in aged care, new conceptions of solidarity in global health ethics, conceptions of suffering in assisted dying laws, how healthcare institutions should make decisions when there are conflicts between social and environmental goods, and the ethics of AI in healthcare.

In the realm of engagements, after having been reappointed by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity to the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, I was appointed in February to serve as co-convenor of the Study Group on Theological Anthropology and Moral Discernment, one of three F&O Study Groups. In July, I concluded my term on the Australian Health Ethics Committee. I continue to serve on the Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand (PSANZ) Ethics group, 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 launched a series of international doctoral webinars on vulnerability and healthcare. We are planning to conduct a workshop at ACU's Rome campus in April 2025 to coincide with the Jubilee for Health Workers and the Sick.

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.

This has been a year in which the staff of the QBC have been recognised for their achievements and ongoing work in various ways, with Bridget Pratt as the standout example. With the ongoing help of our supporters, we expect this to continue in the future.

David G. Kirchhoffer  
Brisbane, 30 September 2024