

# Director's Report: Building Momentum

The Queensland Bioethics Centre continues to gain momentum in its mission to build bioethical capacity in Queensland and Australia to serve the needs of church and Catholic health and aged care agencies in particular and the Australian and Global health ethics contexts in general. As the Brisbane Archdiocese welcomes Archbishop Shane Mackinlay, this year also marks an important transition for the QBC as a partnership between the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the Bishops of Queensland, Catholic Health and Aged Care stakeholders in Queensland and Australian Catholic University. The following provides a brief overview of achievements from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025.



Bridget Pratt, the Mater Associate Professor of Healthcare Ethics has again been named in the 2025 Stanford University/ Elsevier Global Researcher list of the top 2% of scientists worldwide. This is outstanding recognition of the excellent work that Bridget does.

In accordance with the agreements that govern the QBC, our staff have contributed to 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 Health Australia, St John of God Healthcare, and Mary Aikenhead Ministries. 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.

Regarding research outputs, from October 2023 to September 2024, there were eight new publications in high-quality journals or books on topics including physician assisted suicide, social and environmental justice in aged care, solidarity on global health, healthcare resource allocation and environmental sustainability, health equity and community engagement, and international aid after COVID-19. Special mention goes to two of the doctoral students who published their first articles, Ademola Fayemi and Lachlan Green. Two of our doctoral students—Geetanjali Rogers and Lachlan Green—were also involved in the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities international doctoral research collaboration on the topic of Vulnerability and Healthcare. The resulting Statement was presented at a public event to coincide with the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers at the ACU Rome Campus in April that included leaders from various Catholic health and aged care agencies. The full statement is presented in section 3 of this report. 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 engagement, I have been reappointed to by the Federal Minister for Health to the Australian Health Ethics Committee. I continue my role as Roman Catholic Commissioner and co-convenor of the Study Group on theological anthropology and moral discernment of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, which is hosting its first World Conference on Faith and Order since 1993 in October 2025 in Egypt. 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.

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 and has been participating in meetings of the Catholic Health Australia Environmental Working Group.

All of this, and indeed the reality today of the QBC as a partnership between Catholic agencies in Queensland to build bioethical capacity through academic excellence in teaching and research as well as through expert advice and community engagement, would not have been possible without the

support of Archbishop Mark Coleridge. For this, I thank him. With the ongoing help of all our supporters, the QBC will continue its mission, and I look forward to working with Archbishop Shane Mackinlay to continue the momentum that the Centre has built since the inception of this partnership in 2017.

David G. Kirchhoffer  
Brisbane, 30 September 2025