

1. Director's Report

On 1 October 2017, I was officially appointed to the role of Director of the Queensland Bioethics Centre (QBC). The Centre, until then an agency of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, began a new life as a collaboration between the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australian Catholic University, the Bishops of the Province of Queensland, and several Catholic Health and Aged Care agencies in Queensland. The new collaboration was announced by letter to existing supporters who continued their support for the Centre. The Centre was officially relaunched at a ceremony on 25 May 2018.

The partnership with Australian Catholic University has meant the Centre benefits from an association with the university's infrastructure, resources, and reputation for high quality teaching and research in philosophy and religious studies.

This means that, in addition to ad hoc professional development engagements and public lectures, the QBC can now also offer units as part of university qualifications at ACU. The support of the Archdiocese and Bishops of Queensland also serves to attract people, for example Catholic education offices, to these units and other professional development and school engagements.

The Centre has benefitted from participation in a substantial five year research project funded by ACU's Research Fund, in association with the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy's Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry. This international project includes collaboration with leading theological ethicists from Yale, Boston College, Durham, and the Catholic University of Leuven.

Local and international networks have also been further developed through my role as commissioner on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, and the Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church group.

The partnership with ACU further enables the QBC to offer higher degree by research opportunities, and we were fortunate to be able to welcome a visiting doctoral candidate for one year from the Centre for Bioethics at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile.

The merging of the QBC library into ACU's Banyo Campus library means that those who now wish to make use of these resources have access to an even wider range of books.

The Centre continues to benefit from the support of Catholic Health and Aged Care Agencies in Queensland, including Mater Misericordiae, Mercy Health & Aged Care Central Queensland, Mater Health Services North Queensland, St Vincent's Health Australia, and Southern Cross Care (QLD). The centre offers ethics consultations and professional development to these providers.

In the realm of engagement with public policy the Centre has engaged in two major developments. The first is the review of termination of pregnancy laws in Queensland, and the second is the Catholic Health Australia ethics working party on the implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation in Victoria. Both are still underway, and the latter serves well to prepare the Centre for the expected surge to legalise some form of aid in dying in Queensland.

This report provides an overview of the activities of the Centre in its first year of operations. It is divided up in accordance with the objectives of the Centre in the Agreement between Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Australian Catholic University. The future is likely to be a busy one for the Centre as I become more engaged with stakeholders and collaborators locally, nationally, and internationally. I thank the Archdiocese and partners for their continued financial support.



Dr David G. Kirchhoffer
Brisbane, 10 September 2018