

1. Director's Report



This report covers the second year of operations of the Queensland Bioethics Centre (QBC) as a collaboration between the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and Australian Catholic University. I acknowledge the important support by our other stakeholders in Queensland, the Bishops of the Province of Queensland, Mater Group in Brisbane, Mercy Health & Aged Care Central Queensland, Mater Health Services North Queensland, St Vincent's Health Australia, and Southern Cross Care (QLD). It is thanks to their ongoing support and engagement, as well as the synergies that arise from being part of a university, that the QBC is able to fulfil its mandate of research, teaching, engagement and consultation in the field of bioethics.

An important structural change at ACU took place this year. The QBC now forms part of the portfolio of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Coordination, Professor Hayden Ramsay. This brings the Centre under a broader ethics umbrella at ACU, which includes the Plunkett Centre in Sydney, the PM Glynn Institute, and the Centre for Child Protection Studies. This change furthers the Centre's capacity to meet the identified need of developing bioethical skills in the Catholic health and aged care sector. The composition of the Reference Group has been accordingly altered, with Professor Ramsay replacing Professor Dermot Nestor, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy as chair of the group. I would like to thank Professor Nestor for his invaluable help in setting up this agreement in the first place. It would have been impossible without him. His ongoing support for the Centre is extremely valuable, as is the Centre's ongoing relationship with the Faculty.

The Centre's research-related activities continue to progress. A highlight is the publication by Cambridge University Press in 2019 of the book *Beyond Autonomy: limits and alternatives to informed consent in research ethics and law*, co-edited by myself and Bernadette Richards. Among the network of research collaborations now involving the Centre are colleagues from Yale, Boston College, KULeuven, Georgetown University, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, Durham, the University of British Columbia, the University of Adelaide, and the University of Queensland. In addition, important theological ethical networks continue to grow through my work as a Roman Catholic Commissioner on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

Such collaborations not only inform the teaching, engagement and consultation of the Centre, but also provide opportunities to our stakeholders to access high-quality international thinkers. For example, Anita Ho of the University of British Columbia gave three public lectures during her visit to the centre on ethics in palliative care in Canada; Luca Valera of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile participated in a seminar organised by the QBC with colleagues from ACU, UQ and CSIRO on genomic ethics.

Additional engagement and consultation is provided through lectures to schools and public groups, conversations with boards and other leaders in healthcare, clinical case consultation with hospital leaders, advice to bishops on bioethical issues, and sitting on committees tasked with important bioethical work, such as the Catholic Health Australia VAD Taskforce Ethics Committee.

Being affiliated with ACU continues to enable the centre to offer not only valuable professional development to stakeholders on current issues, for example, debates in Queensland about palliative care and "voluntary assisted dying", but also to offer full units in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. This year, the director has conducted units in Catholic Sexual Ethics to cohorts of teachers and pastoral workers in Brisbane and Adelaide, as well as more informal formational inputs in healthcare contexts in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville.

The Centre has grown this year with the appointment of Dr Chi Wai Lui as a Casual Research Associate working on projects related to palliative care and assisted dying. The Centre has also had the pleasure of Jeyver Rodriguez's presence as a doctoral candidate for part of a co-supervision agreement with the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile.

The most significant development in terms of future growth, however, has been the signing of an Affiliation Agreement with Mater Group in Brisbane to support the work of the QBC. We look forward to all that this formal affiliation will bring.

This report provides an overview of the activities of the Centre in 2018/19. It is divided up in accordance with the objectives of the Centre in the Agreement between Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Australian Catholic University.

Dr David G. Kirchoff
Brisbane, 23 September 2019