

Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee

Meeting 14th & 15th April 2011

Canberra

COMMUNIQUE

The Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee (GTECCC) held its first meeting of the 2011-2014 Triennium in Canberra on 14 & 15 April 2011.

GTECCC is a statutory advisory committee to the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator) and the Gene Technology Ministerial Council. All Committee members hold office on a part-time basis. The function of GTECCC is to provide advice to the Regulator (and the GTMC) on request, on issues of ethical or community concern relating to gene technology.

GTECCC members were appointed by the Hon Catherine King MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing on 3 February 2011 for a three year term, The term for the previous committee expired on 31 January 2011.

The purpose of this Communiqué is to provide a brief overview of the key matters considered by GTECCC at its meeting on 14 & 15 April 2011.

GTECCC's Work Plan

GTECCC reviewed the work done by the previous committee and agreed to continue work to finalise projects begun in the previous triennium. The committee also agreed on a work-plan for the 2011-2014 triennium.

National Framework for the Development of Ethical Principles in Gene Technology (the National Framework)

The Chair briefed members on the background, the results of the independent survey conducted in April 2010 and progress of the National Framework Review. The Committee agreed that the draft National Framework should proceed as an aspirational document –which is intended to foster the consideration of ethical issues by those working in gene technology. The Committee agreed to present the framework at the 4th National Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) forum on 8 June 2011 and to consult IBCs and accredited organisations with a view to finalisation.

Environmental Ethics and Gene Technology

The Environmental Ethics Working Group reported on the finalisation of the environmental ethics paper entitled “Environmental ethics as it relates to gene technology in Australia” and informed members of its availability on the OGTR website. This paper is an outcome of GTECCC’s deliberations and is independent from the OGTR.

Community Consultation

The GTECCC agreed to establish a working group to comment on the consultation processes undertaken by the Regulator and OGTR with a focus on dealings involving intentional release (DIR) applications. The objectives of the working group will be to prepare an analysis of current processes and suggestions for improvement for consideration of the full committee.

Risk Communication

GTECCC also agreed to establish a working group in relation to risk communication issues. The risk communication working group will work with the OGTR in its review of the OGTR’s Risk Analysis Framework.

Issues for future consideration

The Committee agreed that the Secretariat liaise with the NHMRC regarding potential input into ongoing consideration of ethical issues in relation to xeno-transplantation, for collaboration with other committees (Animal Welfare Committee and Australian Health Ethics Committee) that consider issues intersecting with gene technology.

GTECCC discussed several other areas of potential work, including consideration of ethical issues in synthetic biology.

Reports

The Committee received a report from the Gene Technology Regulator regarding the activities of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. Reports were also received from the committee’s cross-members with the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) and the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC).

The new committee was welcomed by the Chair and the Gene Technology Regulator. The contributions of previous members were also acknowledged by the Chair and the Gene Technology Regulator.

**For all inquiries, please contact the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator on
1800 181 030 (free-call)**