

Gene Technology Ethics Committee Meeting

25 July 2006, Canberra

COMMUNIQUE

The Gene Technology Ethics Committee (GTEC) held its twelfth meeting in Canberra on 25 July 2006.

GTEC was established by the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (the Act) as a statutory advisory committee to the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator) and the Gene Technology Ministerial Council. All committee members and expert advisers hold office on a part-time basis. (A reference to 'members' in the communiqué includes 'expert advisers').

At its July 2006 meeting, the GTEC Working Group developing the draft paper on Environmental Ethics and Gene Technology reported on its activities since the previous meeting and received feedback and suggestions to further develop the project. Members received presentations on applicant suitability, biosecurity and genetics. Members discussed the recommendations of the Statutory Review of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* and the Gene Technology Agreement, and were informed of relevant work from other national committees via cross-member reports. In addition, members received reports on the general operations of the OGTR and the OGTR's international liaison activities.

Key outcomes from the twelfth meeting are reported below.

GTEC's Work Plan

National Framework for the Development of Ethical Principles in Gene Technology

Members were presented with final copies of the Framework and discussed options for the official public launch of the document. The Committee resolved to launch the Framework at the OGTR Institutional Biosafety Committee Forum in November 2006.

Environmental Ethics and Gene Technology

The Working Group presented the Committee with a revised version of the draft discussion paper on environmental ethics and the implications for gene technology, and highlighted changes made to the second part of the paper, which explores the boundaries and scope of the paper. The Committee discussed different approaches which could be taken and the target audience for the paper. A number of editorial changes were identified.

The Committee resolved to develop the paper further, taking into consideration the changes suggested at the meeting. The Committee also resolved to expand the existing Working Group.

Review of the Gene Technology Act 2000

The Committee discussed the recommendations of the Statutory Review of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* and the Gene Technology Agreement. The Committee noted that several of the recommendations were in line with recommendations it made in its submission

to the Review. The Committee discussed in particular the recommendation that GTEC and the Gene Technology Community Consultative Committee (GTCCC) be combined. In light of this recommendation and the recent appointment of the new GTCCC, the Committee resolved to approach the GTCCC and propose the establishment of a collaborative project between the two Committees.

GTEC and Relationships with Other Committees

The Committee received reports from the Chair, the Gene Technology Regulator, the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) and the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC).

The Committee noted the appointment of the new Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC) and resolved to send a letter of congratulations to the incoming Chair.

Next Meeting

The next GTEC meeting will be held in November 2006.

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