

# Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee

## Meeting 18th February 2009 Canberra

### COMMUNIQUE

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The Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee (GTECCC) held its second meeting of the Triennium in Canberra on 18 February 2009.

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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.

The purpose of this Communiqué is to provide a brief overview of the key matters considered by GTECCC at its second meeting on 18 February 2009.

#### **GTECCC's Work Plan**

GTECCC reviewed work undertaken to date and resolved to focus on several key areas, including finalisation of some unfinished projects. The following will remain as the main objectives for GTECCC in the short term:

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

GTECCC resolved to commence a review of the Framework, noting that it had been the former GTEC's intention to take stock of the document after three years.

GTECCC established a working group which will undertake consultation with stakeholders to obtain feedback on the usefulness and operationalisation of the Framework's nine principles.

#### **Environmental Ethics and Gene Technology**

GTECCC reviewed progress on finalisation of this paper and requested the working group to review the current draft and recirculate to members for any additional revisions. The paper will be referred to the working group established to review the National Framework for the Development of Ethical Principles in Gene Technology (the Framework) to inform their work.

GTECCC also noted and discussed a significant report recently produced by the European Ethics Group (EGE) – *Opinion No 24 – Ethics of modern developments in agriculture technologies*. The document included a number of principles that the committee considered would provide a useful reference for future GTECCC activities.

## **Community Consultation**

GTECCC considered a compilation of surveys undertaken in Australia since 1999 to gauge community attitudes to gene technology. The Committee reaffirmed that its role was to provide advice to the Regulator on facilitating community engagement in OGTR processes.

## **GTECCC and Relationships with Other Committees**

The Committee received a report from the acting 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).

An invitation was extended to Dr David Adams from the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC's) Animal Welfare Committee as an observer. Dr Adams is invited to participate in future GTECCC meetings.

The GTECCC Committee agreed that consideration of the most effective approaches and tools for community consultation remains an important issue and will remain on the agenda at the next meeting. The background paper produced by the former GTCCC and documents from the Canadian Deliberative Democracy and the International Association for Public Participation will be incorporated in discussion.

GTECCC also considered whether there were other key committees that they might establish formal links with. None were identified however, GTECCC noted that interactions with other committees should be determined on a case by case needs basis if issues arose.

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