

Irish Council for Bioethics

Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes of Council Meeting Thursday 3rd December 2009

- In the Chair:** Dr Dolores Dooley
- Present:** Professor Alan Donnelly, Professor Andrew Green, Dr Richard Hull, Dr Peter Mckenna, Professor J.V. McLoughlin, Professor Cliona O'Farrelly, Mr Asim Sheikh BL, Professor David Smith, Dr Sheila Willis, Dr Mary Henry, Mr Stephen McMahon
- Apologies for absence:** Professor Richard Kennedy, Mr Turlough O'Donnell SC
- Also present:** Ms Emily de Grae; Mr Paul Ivory; Ms Emma Clancy

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted and signed.

2. Report from the Managing Director

Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan informed Council that the virtual launch of the Biometrics document had taken place on the 4th of November 2009. Dr O'Sullivan noted that there was significant media coverage relating to the report including an in-depth discussion on "Today with Pat Kenny" on RTÉ Radio 1.

Dr O'Sullivan also informed Council that the commissioned document entitled *Ethical Framework for Decision Making in a Pandemic* had been completed and would be presented to the Department of Health and Children before the end of the year.

Dr O'Sullivan reported that the possibility of broadcasting an abridged version of *Begotten Not Made* on RTÉ Radio 1 seemed less likely as a result of contractual constraints on the part of RTÉ.

There followed a short discussion of the briefing paper on synthetic biology that Dr O'Sullivan had prepared and circulated to Council. All agreed that it is a very interesting topic and one, which the Council might examine at a future date.

3. Annual Report /ICB Web Report

Dr O' Sullivan reported that data relating to traffic on the ICB's website had been compiled. She informed Council that the 2008 *Ethical, Scientific and Legal Issues Concerning Stem Cell Research Opinion* was the most downloaded report, which was closely followed by *Human Biological Material: Recommendations for Collection, Use and Storage in Research 2005*. The data also highlighted the popularity of the

information leaflet series. Council Members expressed the view that the high rate of downloads of these reports and information leaflets was a testament to their quality and continuing relevance.

Dr O'Sullivan also notified Council that the annual report was nearing completion. It was agreed that the annual report should be altered to showcase the compendium of valuable work undertaken by the ICB since its inception in 2002. Dr O'Sullivan invited any Members who wished to do so, to submit comments to be included in the "Foreword" of the compendium. It was agreed that once the "Foreword" was completed and approved, it would be constructive for each Council Member to add his/her signature in order to show solidarity in relation to the opinions expressed therein.

4. Future of the ICB

Dr O'Sullivan informed Council that since September, a number of letters had been sent to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), asking for clarity in relation to the future of the ICB, specifically regarding the possibility of a reconfigured Council. She reported that, to date, no response had been received. She also informed Council that no formal instruction regarding the winding-up of the company had been forthcoming.

Dr O'Sullivan explained to Council that the de-incorporation of the ICB seemed inevitable. It was agreed that costs accruing from the de-incorporation should not be the responsibility of the Council or the Directors and that the Council should seek additional funding from the DETE.

Council agreed that a strategy aimed at progressing matters should be implemented and that, in the first instance, a letter should be sent to the Minister for Health and Children requesting support from her Department.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The date and venue of the next Council meeting is to be confirmed.