

ACART meeting minutes

Thursday 18 December 2025 (8:45 am – 4:15 pm)

Attendees:

Professor Debra Wilson (Chair)
Kathleen Logan
Catherine Ryan
Dr Lynsey Cree
Neuton Lambert
Dr Karaitiana Taiuru (Deputy Chair)
Shalomy Sathiyaraj
Dr Andrew Murray
Seth Fraser

Dr Simon McDowell (ECART)

Saskia Patton (Secretariat)
Ben Clayton (Secretariat)
Kirsten Forrest (Secretariat)

Dr Katherine Neas (Guest speaker)

Apologies:

Amanda Lees

1. Opening and apologies

- Meeting opened without formal opening comments.
- One apology was noted. The committee agreed to accept the apology.

2. Confirmation of agenda

- The day's agenda was reviewed and approved.
- One member (SF) needed to leave early.

3. Declarations of interest

- Members were reminded to notify the secretariat of any new or emerging interests so the register remains current.
 - A full review of the register is planned for early next year.
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4. Minutes of previous meeting

- Minutes were approved.
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5. Actions arising from previous meeting

5.1 Member timetables for next year

- Members had been asked to send their availability to the secretariat.
- The secretariat confirmed meeting dates had already been circulated.
- Key meeting dates for next year were noted (March, May, July, September, November).

5.2 Combined ACART/ECART meeting

- Discussion noted that no date had been set.
- Possibility of a mid-year training day is being explored.
- Secretariat staff are investigating timing.

5.3 Human reproductive research examples

- Members had been previously asked to consider examples relevant to the human reproductive research item.
 - This item was returned to later in the meeting.
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6. Chair's report

- Chair noted limited activity due to recent leave.
 - Work has continued on:
 - Progressing the PGT-related project.
 - Considering response to the Minister (discussed later).
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7. Member reports

- No updates were provided.
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8. Secretariat update

The secretariat provided several updates:

8.1 ACART & ECART appointments

- Appointments process has been extended to 9 January to allow for holiday-period applications.
- Several members have terms expiring mid-year:
 - Eligible members must apply for reappointment through the Ministry website.

8.2 Surrogacy Bill

- Originally due for Select Committee report-back last week.
- Report-back date extended to **1 April 2026**.

8.3 Petition of Ann Chapman

- Petitions Committee reported back on 24 October.
- Recommended government review of section 10 of the HART Act.
- Government response is due by **12 February 2026**.

8.4 Unintended discrimination matter

- Secretariat summarised legal and policy work examining possible unintended discrimination in sibling gamete donation under the HART Order.
- Committee discussed:
 - Whether the issue should be addressed narrowly (resolving the index case) or broadly (full structural fix).
 - Whether ECART could implement operational improvements in the meantime.
- Committee agreed the secretariat should prepare a briefing paper for consideration next year.
- International policy comparisons and gender-affirming language should be included in the advice.

Action item: Secretariat to prepare a briefing paper on sibling gamete donation and surrogacy matters, including international policy and inclusive language considerations, for discussion next year.

9. Monitoring: ECART meeting reports

- Committee noted ECART's recent decisions.
- Chair noted a couple of matters for the committee:

- Surrogacy case – counselling for children of surrogates.
- Increasing international surrogacy links.
- No immediate action required but trends will be monitored.
- A case involving embryo donation to a whānau raised questions about iwi recognition and whakapapa rights.

Action item: ECART representative (SM) to raise cultural lineage considerations (e.g. iwi membership implications) in upcoming ECART discussion.

- One member noted an interesting case concerning social media and surrogacy privacy considerations.
- There was also discussion regarding an extended storage application.

10. Correspondence

- The committee received correspondence from an individual who made a written and oral submission to the Governance and Administration Committee regarding amendments to the HART Act.
- The committee had a discussion on extended storage limits, prompted by:
 - The Ann Chapman petition.
 - Import/export issues.
 - Posthumous use of gametes.
 - Previous ACART advice.
- The secretariat advised it may be useful to wait for:
 - Government response to the Ann Chapman petition (due Feb).
 - Surrogacy Bill report-back (due April).
- There was discussion on whether more fundamental changes to the HART Act should be considered/recommended, so that the legislation is less prescriptive and provides ACART/ECART with more discretion.

Action item: Secretariat to circulate previous ACART advice and consultation documents on extended storage.

Action item: Committee to revisit extended storage as a potential work programme item next year, depending on government responses. Committee to also consider wider/more fundamental changes to the HART Act next year.

11. Discussion on letter to the Minister regarding human reproductive research

- A group of members (KL, LC & AM) had prepared additional ideas in support of human reproductive research for the letter to the Minister.

- Members collectively agreed on (for the letter to the Minister) the importance of:
 - Simplifying the messaging.
 - Explaining clinical relevance clearly and making this distinction clear.
 - Avoiding technical, scientific terminology.
 - Highlighting real-world benefits for patients, including:
 - Improved IVF success rates.
 - Reduction in preventable pregnancy loss.
 - Better evaluation of existing techniques.
 - Consumer protection.
- Members emphasised the committee’s duty to continue the discussion on HRR with the Minister.
- The committee discussed the importance of effective science communication. Approaches suggested:
 - Using simple, relatable explanations.
 - Highlighting New Zealand’s strong research track record and global contributions.
 - Consideration of economic impacts.

11.1 International comparisons

- The committee agreed that demonstrating how New Zealand compares to similar jurisdictions would strengthen the argument.
- Australia was discussed as:
 - Having a more permissive but tightly regulated system.
 - Allowing categories of research not currently permitted in New Zealand.

11.2 Proposed research categories

- Summarised by members into five buckets:
 - 1. Observation of embryos (non-interventional).
 - 2. Application of technologies (e.g. AI embryo assessment, PGT approaches).
 - 3. Use of surplus embryos (with consent).
 - 4. Creation of embryos for research.
 - 5. Cloning-related research.

- The committee agreed to frame the letter to the Minister around categories 1 & 2 (and possibly 3), while acknowledging the full spectrum as long-term context.

11.3 Strategy for engaging with the Minister

- The committee discussed next steps:
 - A meeting with the Minister should be sought early in the new year.
 - The letter should:
 - Be short and accessible.
 - Focus solely on reproductive research (not broader ACART objectives).
 - Clearly convey benefits, safety, and practical examples.
 - Propose a phased approach to HRR work, to be discussed at the meeting with the Minister.
 - A member with clinical or scientific expertise may accompany the Chair to assist in explanation at the meeting.

Action item: Secretariat to draft a revised letter reflecting the discussion, using:

- The transcript.
- The member-produced additional ideas document.
- Draft letter provided by AM.
- Examples and categories discussed.

The draft will be circulated to the full committee for feedback.

Action item: Secretariat to request an early-year meeting with the Minister, in advance of sending the letter.

12. Horizon scanning project

- The Chair proposed commissioning a horizon scanning literature review to her university students as an academic assignment.
- Students would:
 - Conduct literature reviews.
 - Present findings to ACART.
 - Understand how their work may inform ACART's advice.
- Members supported the idea, noting:
 - Students would benefit from practical experience.
 - ACART would still produce its own final advice for the Minister.

Action item: Chair to coordinate horizon scanning work with her students, including presentations to the committee.

13. Discussion on PGT-M and VUS project

- The committee had a discussion on the paper it received from the secretariat. Discussion themes included:
 - Tension between scientific criteria and clinical realities.
 - The roles of ACART/ECART – there was recognition that ACART/ECART cannot adjudicate scientific classification but could evaluate ethical considerations, informed consent, consumer protection, and fairness.
 - Risk, harm, and informed consent.
- The committee heard from Dr Katherine Neas (Genetic Health Service NZ). Dr Neas gave a presentation then had a discussion with the committee.
- Members appreciated gaining a clinical perspective of the case that was referred to them. It was generally agreed that some type of dispute resolution mechanism is needed.
- Two options for progressing this project were discussed:
 - 1. Short, narrowly scoped guidelines addressing cases such as this.
 - 2. A broader review of PGT-M criteria and decision-making.
- Need for timely action was emphasised by members.
- It was noted that any broader reforms would likely require changes to the HART Act/Order, and that this could take several years. The two options can be progressed in parallel.
- The committee agreed that the secretariat should develop options for short, narrowly scoped guidelines in time for the next meeting.
- The committee agreed that the secretariat commission a literature review covering international regulatory approaches to PGT for VUS.

Action item: Secretariat to prepare a paper for the committee covering:

- Options for short, narrowly scoped guidelines.
- Consultation requirements (after seeking legal advice).
- An overview of what a broader review of PGT-M criteria and decision-making would entail.

Action item: Secretariat to commission literature review requested by committee.

13.1 Rare Disorders NZ follow-up

- The committee agreed to delay sending any questions to Rare Disorders NZ.

- It was agreed that the committee should wait until the results of the current survey are released (expected March-April 2026).
- The committee requested the secretariat write to Rare Disorders NZ on their behalf, inviting them to present their results at the March 2026 meeting.

Action item: Secretariat to draft letter to Rare Disorders NZ and send to Chair for review in early-2026.

14. Other business and closing

- An in-person meeting for 2026 was requested by members.
- The secretariat provided a reminder of an upcoming seminar on polygenic embryo screening.
- Meeting closed with karakia and members exchanged holiday wishes.

Action item: Secretariat to check budget for possible 2026 in-person meeting/training day.