

Queensland Health

Our ref:
Your ref:

CAPS1834
A596434

Mr Peter Russo MP
Chair
Legal Affairs and Safety Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Russo

Thank you for your letter dated 7 September 2020 regarding the Auditor-General's report to Parliament No. 21: 2018-19 – *Delivering forensic services*.

I am pleased to provide you with the enclosed update on Queensland Health's progress towards implementing relevant recommendations made by the Auditor-General. Progress on implementation remains on track, despite the significant efforts responsible agencies have had to make to support the State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Should you, or officers of your Department, require further information, the Department of Health's contact is [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Dr John Wakefield PSM
Director-General

15 . 9 . 2020

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Report No. 21: 2018-19 - Delivering forensic services Progress Report - September 2020 (Queensland Health)

Recommendation	Timeframe	Agency Comment	Implementation progress
<i>Recommendation 1: Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health implement a governance structure to effectively coordinate and provide accountability for managing forensic services across agencies.</i>	Dec-2019	A Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Health and the Queensland Police Service is under development to establish a governance structure to oversight the effective and efficient delivery of analytical services and promote collaboration and cooperation between agencies.	<p>Delayed</p> <p>A Draft Memorandum of understanding to govern forensic testing services and facilitate information exchange and collaboration has been drafted and continues to be under consideration by both agencies. Progress has been impacted by agency priorities to manage Queensland's response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, agencies continue to engage at senior levels and have agreed to form a Liaison group comprising representatives from Queensland Police, Queensland Health and the Director of Public Prosecutions to further progress the MOU and facilitate inter-agency coordination.</p>
<i>Recommendation 2: Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health implement a process to coordinate and manage collecting, transporting, prioritising, and destroying illicit drugs. The revised process should reduce the risks to security, occupational health and safety, and the cost of unnecessary handling.</i>	Dec-2020	Queensland Health will work with Queensland Police Service to review processes for the collection, transport, prioritising and destruction of illicit drugs and implement improvements identified.	<p>On-track</p> <p>Queensland Police Service is conducting a review of illicit drug forensic exhibits through the service alignment program. Queensland Health has been engaged in the review program.</p>

<p>Recommendation 4: <i>The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service and all hospital and health services continue to develop and deliver reforms to forensic medical examinations to improve services to victims.</i></p>	<p>Dec-2019</p>	<p>Queensland Health will continue to contribute to the finalisation of the Response to sexual assault - Queensland Government Interagency Guidelines for Responding to People who have Experienced Sexual Assault and will develop a communication strategy to support Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) implement the guidelines at a local level.</p> <p>Queensland Health has commenced consultation with HHSs on a Health Service Directive to establish mandatory sexual assault service standards.</p> <p>Funding and service accountabilities to support implementation of the reforms have been included in HHS Service Agreements for 2019-20.</p> <p>A nursing education program is in development to expand the number of clinicians able to conduct assault examinations.</p> <p>Queensland Health is working in collaboration with Queensland Police and HHSs to ensure patients disclosing sexual assault are supported in deciding to have a forensic examination or whether to defer police investigations if they choose</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p><i>Health Service Directive QH-HSD-051:2019 Caring for people disclosing sexual assault became effective from 22 July 2019 and required each Hospital and Health Service (HHS) to ensure clinicians were available to provide forensic medical examinations. Additional funding was allocated in HHS agreements for 2019-22 to support implementation.</i></p> <p>Medical officer professional education sessions are delivered to HHS doctors through the Clinical Forensic Medical Unit. A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner training program commenced in September 2019 in collaboration with Central Queensland University. Resource materials for clinicians has been published to the Queensland Health intranet site.</p> <p>Pathways are now available for victims of sexual assault to enable just-in-case examination without immediately reporting an assault to police and ensure victims are aware of alternate reporting options (police website). Patient referral to a support services is part of the pathway. A supplementary telephone-based post-acute counselling support service has been established through the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital's sexual assault response team.</p> <p>Information resources on sexual assault pathways are included in clinician professional education and available on QH Intranet site.</p>
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<p>Recommendation 5: Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General improve the prioritisation and timely sharing of case information between agencies. This should include establishing systems and processes (and where possible automation) to ensure there is real-time notification of changes in priority or status to avoid unnecessary analysis.</p>	Dec-2020	<p>Queensland Health will work collaboratively with the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to identify options to improve information sharing of case information.</p>	<p>On-track</p> <p>Agencies have formed a Liaison Group to further consider opportunities to enhance information sharing and explore data exchange, though it is recognised that investment in existing IT systems will be difficult to prioritise.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that the review of illicit forensic drug exhibits currently underway will also improve prioritising of exhibits and mitigate some of the risks outlined by the Auditor-General.</p>