



Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Nicholls**


**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Virology Laboratory, Biosecurity Breach Investigation**

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.49 am): Yesterday the Crisafulli government announced an investigation into a serious breach at Queensland's public health virology laboratory. This investigation will review a major breach of biosecurity protocols at Queensland's public health virology laboratory which saw up to 323 vials of infectious virus samples unaccounted for. Many of these are samples and the public does not need to worry about them, but there are others that are much more concerning.

The part 9 investigation will be led by the Hon. Martin Daubney AM, KC a retired Supreme Court judge, and will examine the handling of the Hendra virus, the lyssavirus and hantavirus—a virus not normally present in Australia. It will examine the handling of those materials without appropriate record keeping. Mr Daubney will be assisted by Mr Julian Druce, who is the former head of the Virus Identification Laboratory of Victoria. The investigation is expected to conclude in June next year and the findings will be released in full, subject only to any privacy provisions required under the law.

While the Chief Health Officer has advised there is unlikely to be any risk to the community from this breach, the public does have a right to know about this incident. The breach in question occurred in 2021 while the public health virology laboratory was part of the former Forensic and Scientific Services based at Coopers Plains. If Forensic and Scientific Services sounds familiar, it is because it was also the site of Labor's failed DNA scandal where a commission of inquiry uncovered instances of grave maladministration and now may require the review of over 40,000 cases while delaying justice for victims of crime, as the Attorney knows.

Labor must have known there were bigger problems at the FSS facility. The 2022 commission of inquiry into Labor's DNA lab debacle revealed that the management structure at FSS—where only one executive director had oversight of 10 specialised scientific services with 380 staff, as was reported in the report—was destined to result in at least some insufficiency of oversight. The report does go on to say—

The structure of FSS to give one Executive Director such a remit was destined to result in at least some insufficiency of oversight. Mr Doherty said—

... that there were budget constraints and cultural concerns prevalent across the whole of FSS and a lack of corporate support to address those issues.

Labor did the bare minimum in response to the commission of inquiry. They took no action to examine issues across the broader Coopers Plains facility. Even when a second commission of inquiry in 2023 uncovered further scandals at the DNA laboratory, the member for Waterford failed to make sure the other critical services at Coopers Plains were up to scratch. If one thing was going wrong, why not ask the question, 'What else needs to be looked at?' The member for Waterford and Labor failed to ask the simplest of questions.

We have seen yet another consequence of Labor's failed management of these laboratories because they were more interested in how things looked than in how things were. The Crisafulli government has now also commissioned respected scientist Dr Kirsty Wright to examine the ongoing issues of the DNA laboratory. Our government is, yet again, left to clean up the mess left by Labor at Coopers Plains.

This is not the only mess we are cleaning up. We are raking through Labor's cooked books on health infrastructure and finding blowout after blowout, so far to the tune of \$6 billion across the state. The Crisafulli government will fix Labor's mess, end the cost blowouts and deliver world-class health services for Queenslanders.