

Question on Notice
No. 206
Asked on 1 March 2006

MR JOHNSON asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to forensic evidence, scientific testing and post-mortems undertaken by the John Tonge Centre—

How many forensic biology cases are currently awaiting analysis and, of these, how many have been identified as new DNA sample submissions and backlog DNA sample cases (reported separately)?

ANSWER:

As at 1 March 2006 there were 13,410 Forensic Biology major crime cases and volume crime cases awaiting analysis. Of these 9,586 are classified as old cases and 3,824 are new submissions, that is cases received after 1 February 2005.

The Reform Team's activity has already produced a range of improvements.

The number of outstanding clandestine drug laboratory cases has fallen significantly from 197 cases as at 30 June 2005 to 122 as at 28 February 2006, and the time to test a clandestine drug laboratory for the Courts has now fallen to six months (from 2-2 ½ years in early 2005). These improvements are primarily due to case management with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and changed business processes at Queensland Health Scientific Services (QHSS). Four extra clandestine laboratory chemists are being recruited to assist police at the scenes of these laboratories. Amendments to the *Drugs Misuse Act 1986* recently passed by the Parliament will lead to reduced testing requirements for clandestine drug laboratories.

Detailed modelling has been undertaken to estimate the staffing and other requirements to eliminate outstanding DNA cases by the end of 2007. Total staffing establishment in the DNA laboratory is expected to have increased by approximately 50 per cent from the end of 2005 to approximately 100 staff in May 2006. Automated analytical equipment has been purchased and will be implemented into DNA testing from May-June 2006 to January 2007. A refurbishment of the DNA laboratory will be completed in April 2006 to accommodate the additional scientists. A summary of testing activity in Forensic Sciences from July 2005 to February 2006 is contained in the table below:

All Toxicology		All Chemistry		All Biology	
Received	Reported	Received	Reported	Received	Reported
12,532	12,589	1,883	1,896	14,264	14,866