

Question on Notice

No. 800

Asked on 17 August 2022

MR T NICHOLLS ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND MINISTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (HON S FENTIMAN) –

QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General advise how many cases are currently before the Coroner's Court that are more than three years old?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Clayfield for the question.

The Coroners Court of Queensland is responsible for investigating reportable deaths, such as those that are sudden or unexpected or occurred in custody, police operations or in care. This ensures those categories of death are independently and appropriately scrutinised, and that consideration is given to opportunities to prevent future deaths occurring in similar circumstances.

Coroners are aware that delays in finalising coronial matters can cause distress for families and strive to conclude matters quickly and efficiently. At the same time, it is important coroners conduct comprehensive and robust investigations.

I am advised that as of 18 August 2022, 2,410 cases were under investigation by the Coroners Court of Queensland.

Of those 2,410 cases, 160 (or 6.6%) have been under investigation for more than three years.

The importance of conducting comprehensive and robust investigations is paramount and often requires investigative processes across government agencies to finalise matters. A range of investigative reports inform coroners' investigations and include autopsy, toxicology, and police reports. Depending on the circumstances of the death, coroners may also be required to await the outcome of other expert investigations and criminal proceedings.

Of the 160 cases under investigation for more than three years:

- 63 cases are awaiting the outcome of criminal proceedings before continuing with the coronial investigation; and
- 31 cases are waiting on receipt of further investigations or specific reports in order to complete the coronial investigation.

I continue to monitor the workloads of the Coroners Court as I recognise that delays in coronial investigations can cause unnecessary distress for grieving families and loved ones.

I also extend my appreciation to coroners and those who work within the coronial system on the frontline responding directly to bereaved families in a professional and compassionate manner.