

Question on Notice

No. 1450

Asked on 15 November 2023

MR R MOLHOEK ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

QUESTION

With reference to the 15 December 2022 announcement of \$95m in immediate funding to address Forensic DNA Commission of Inquiry findings—

Will the Minister provide a breakdown of the funds expended to date by the Department of Health?

ANSWER

I am committed to implementing all of the findings made by Mr Walter Sofronoff KC's '*Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland*' in 2022 and Dr Annabelle Bennett AC SC's '*Commission of Inquiry to examine Project 13 concerns*' – to ensure integrity in Queensland's criminal justice system.

In December 2022, the government provided an initial investment of \$95 million to support implementation of the recommendations and other reforms to build a world-leading forensic service for Queensland.

\$81.2 million of this funding was allocated to Queensland Health and \$13.8 million to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

As a number of these initiatives have only recently commenced, a range of costs have been expensed to various cost centers across multiple divisions. Collating this information would be an unreasonable diversion of the department's resources.

The funding provided to Queensland Health is allocated and will be expended over four financial years (2022-23 to 2025-26). The funding is supporting a range of response measures and initiatives over this period as follows:

- \$34.8 million over four years (including \$4.2 million in the 2022/23 financial year and \$10.2 million recurrently from 2023/24) for the engagement of additional forensic scientists and other support staff to boost Forensic Science Queensland's overall testing capacity, as well as the introduction of enhanced quality management and new research and innovation functions. To date, 26 additional scientists have been engaged.
- Up to \$29.5 million to support forensic DNA testing required through external providers to supplement Forensic Science Queensland services. \$19.5 million of this funding has been re-allocated directly to Forensic Science Queensland to expand 'in-house' Forensic Science Queensland testing capacity. This funding is being invested in facility upgrades, analytical equipment and IT

upgrades, as well as the introduction of new services like Y-chromosome testing. Up to \$10 million remains available to support testing by external forensic service providers, as required.

- A further \$14 million over three years (2022-23 to 2024-25, including \$3 million in 2022-23) is allocated to non-recurrent responses. These include coordinating review of cases potentially impacted by deficient past DNA testing practices, ensuring enhanced governance oversight through an interim Advisory Board, and smoothly transitioning Forensic Science Queensland from the health portfolio to the justice portfolio.
- \$2.9 million over four years from 2022-23 has been allocated for the implementation of Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations, which intersect with recommendations of the 2022 Commission of Inquiry. The funding is supporting the development of a victim-centric, trauma-informed service model for forensic examinations, the provision of new modular Forensic Medicine Examination Kits (FMEKs) to Hospital and Health Services and training front-line clinicians in using FMEKs and providing evidence in court.