

## Question on Notice

No. 419

Asked on 17 April 2024

**MR J KRAUSE** ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

### QUESTION

With reference to Pathology Queensland—

Will the Minister advise (reported separately by financial year) from 2015-16 to 2022-23, the average turnaround time for (a) Complexity Code 4.1 samples, (reported separately for each Pathology Queensland Laboratory listed on Pathology Queensland's website (<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/pathology-queensland/healthcare/laboratories>)), (b) Complexity Code 4.1 samples, state wide (c) Complexity Code 6 samples (reported separately for each Pathology Queensland Laboratory listed on Pathology Queensland's website (<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/pathology-queensland/healthcare/laboratories>)) and (d) Complexity Code 6 samples, state wide?

### ANSWER

Over the last 10 years, the Anatomical Pathology (AP) workload has increased by 50 per cent. The histology registrations have also grown by around 11 per cent in the last 12 months. There are many drivers of demand for AP including an increase in the volume of biopsies and increasing volume of diagnostic pathology requests from surgeons.

There is a national and international shortage of Anatomical Pathologists (APs), particularly in the regional centres and with increases to workforce not keeping pace with the demand, there has been an impact on Pathology Queensland's (PQ) histology turnaround times.

To address this, PQ has undertaken a sustained recruitment drive. Since July 2023, PQ has invested an additional \$8.89 million in AP. This represents an increase of 34 frontline positions including 15 additional APs, 6 additional registrars and 13 additional laboratory and support positions.

The AP work is subject to ongoing review and allocation of work to align with clinical priorities. Clinically urgent samples such as breast cores are prioritised over other samples that are dependent on externalities such as autopsy reports.

Further investment, of \$6.9 million has been committed to roll out digital anatomical pathology capacity across laboratories providing anatomical pathology services.

In the period for which data is sought, PQ made some significant changes in its data management processes to improve accuracy.

To access data prior to April 2022, would be an unreasonable diversion of resources. Data for the period from April 2022 is set out below.

<b>HISL4.1 Average Turnaround (days)</b>				
<b>Testing Lab</b>	<b>2021/22 Jan – Jun</b>	<b>2022/23 Jul - Jun</b>	<b>2023/24 July - Dec</b>	<b>2023/24 Jan - Current</b>
Cairns	3.77	3.96	4.59	3.37
RBWH	11.56	18.26	18.13	15.08
Gold Coast	2.77	4.91	6.32	6.68
PA	3.72	7.68	18.70	12.10
Prince Charles	2.91	3.04	2.83	2.99
SCUH	4.47	8.91	15.86	9.21
Toowoomba	5.45	5.69	6.76	6.92
Townsville	4.61	5.24	5.14	4.41
<b>PQ Overall</b>	<b>6.71</b>	<b>10.59</b>	<b>13.36</b>	<b>10.39</b>

<b>HISL6 Average Turnaround (days)</b>				
<b>Testing Lab</b>	<b>2021/22 Jan - Jun</b>	<b>2022/23 Jul – Jun</b>	<b>2023/24 July - Dec</b>	<b>2023/24* Jan - current</b>
Cairns		3.7	5.27	10.04
Central-RBWH	10.01	10.73	11.41	11.77
Gold Coast	8.82	8.17	8.67	9.75
PA	6.71	8.46	10.82	10.95
Prince Charles	4.38	4.28	4.40	4.46
SCUH	6.00	8.62	12.38	11.42
Toowoomba	7.21	8.15	9.44	11.15
Townsville	13.24	13.02	17.35	6.83
<b>PQ Overall</b>	<b>8.42</b>	<b>9.11</b>	<b>10.55</b>	<b>10.38</b>

Data sourced from AUSLAB.