



Queensland Government  
First Progress Report

# **Delivery of Recommendations**

Commission of Inquiry into  
Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland



**Queensland  
Government**

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**Delivery of Recommendations**  
Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland  
September 2023

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## Message from the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women & the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

It is of the utmost importance that the Queensland public has confidence in the criminal justice system, where our forensic scientists play a critical role. By examining and analysing evidence, forensic scientists assist the investigation and prosecution of people who commit crimes, and the ruling out of innocent persons from suspicion.

The Queensland Government established the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing to examine the robustness of Queensland's forensic DNA analysis services. The findings of the Inquiry have provided a blueprint for structural change, with all 126 recommendations accepted by our government.

We have moved quickly to provide an initial investment of more than \$95 million for significant short and longer-term reform work, which seeks to restore confidence and trust in the forensic testing process and the broader criminal justice system. We know that this may cause distress for victims of crime, so we are investing in additional support services to ensure there is trauma counselling available.

Following the delivery of the Final Report, a new administrative unit known as Forensic Science Queensland (FSQ) was established to focus solely on the delivery of forensic DNA and chemistry services within Queensland. This new unit is headed up by internationally renowned expert, Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde OAM, who has been appointed as the interim Chief Executive Officer to lead FSQ through the necessary reform process.

To guide the implementation, an interim Advisory Board chaired by the former Commissioner, Walter Sofronoff KC, and former President of the Children's Court of Queensland, Julie Dick SC, has been established. The Board consists of senior experts from the criminal justice system, victim advocacy, and forensic science agencies, who will play a critical role in restoring integrity and transparency to the delivery of Queensland's forensic services.

It is our privilege to present the Queensland Government's first progress report on the implementation of the recommendations. Significant progress has been made towards reforming Queensland's forensic services over the past eight months.

While this progress report outlines several achievements, there remains a great deal of work to be done. Queensland Health, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service continue to collaboratively address and implement the recommendations, and will continue to action report findings and identify any opportunities for improvement.

The Queensland Government has committed to quarterly progress reports so that Queenslanders can be assured that the necessary reforms will be implemented.

Given the consistent progress being made by FSQ under Professor Wilson-Wilde's able leadership, we are confident that Queensland will soon become a leader for the delivery of high quality, timely and innovative forensic services.

**Hon Shannon Fentiman MP**  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services  
Minister for Women

**Hon Yvette D'Ath MP**  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice  
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

## Message from the Co-Chairs of the Forensic Science Queensland Interim Advisory Board

Queenslanders deserve to have absolute confidence in their criminal justice system. Forensic services play a critical role in the criminal justice system, spanning from simple offences to more serious crimes, such as sexual assault and murder. In Queensland, the vast majority of DNA results that are presented as evidence before the criminal courts of Queensland have been provided by Forensic Science Queensland (FSQ), which was formerly administered as 'Forensic and Scientific Services'.

The Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland identified failures across a range of systems and structures within the Forensic and Scientific Services' laboratory which adversely impacted the scientific integrity of the results it had been producing. A significant reform agenda to reclaim public confidence in the DNA laboratory has been undertaken in the wake of the Commission of Inquiry's findings.

We are pleased to observe that much has been achieved over the past eight months since the Commission of Inquiry delivered its Final Report. We would particularly like to commend Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde OAM, the Chief Executive Officer, FSQ on her efforts to lead this reform agenda. Professor Wilson-Wilde has also been successful in building a strong leadership team to support her and the laboratory's personnel. This has not been an easy task given the very limited pool of suitably credentialed DNA scientists available within Australia.

We have been impressed by the level of expertise and seniority of members on the Advisory Board that we hold the privilege in chairing. The interim Advisory Board consists of distinguished experts in the fields of criminal justice, victim advocacy and forensic sciences. The Board has hit the ground running, having already met three times to consider implementation progress that has been made by FSQ and the Queensland Police Service. Members have been incredibly generous with their time and advice and continue to provide valuable oversight and contributions.

We are satisfied with the implementation progress made so far with almost three quarters of the 123 recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry's final report either having been delivered or currently being progressed. While some delivery timeframes have needed to be adjusted from those timeframes originally outlined within the Commission of Inquiry's final report, we, and the rest of the Board, are comfortable with the justifications behind these variations. Many of the recommendations are interconnected and complex and it is vitally important that implementation activities are undertaken in the correct order to ensure their fulsome delivery in a quality-assured manner.

We look forward to continuing to contribute to this important work as we, and the interim Advisory Board, assist FSQ in its restoration of the community's confidence in its forensic services.

**Walter Sofronoff KC and Julie Dick SC**  
Co-Chairs, FSQ Interim Advisory Board



## Foreword by the Chief Executive Officer of Forensic Science Queensland

As the new Chief Executive Officer of FSQ, I have the great privilege of leading the reform of the Queensland forensic science laboratory and I am proud to report on our progress so far. This includes not only significant steps to implement the recommendations, but also a large number of other agency building initiatives and service delivery improvements which have been identified to date.

A major component of being able to implement the Commission of Inquiry recommendations has been to recruit new scientific staff to undertake the various change projects while maintaining business-as-usual activities. I am pleased to say that the initial round of recruitment processes have been completed and new staff have commenced with FSQ and will continue to commence over the coming months. Recruitment is ongoing, but once finalised will provide FSQ with the staffing numbers and expertise needed to gain momentum on the reform agenda.

The Commission of Inquiry has been the impetus for many of the significant changes currently underway at FSQ. However, I am also committed to utilising the Commission of Inquiry as an opportunity to embed a culture of continuous quality improvement and innovation. FSQ's change agenda is not just limited to those recommended by the Commission of Inquiry, but will be a permanent feature in FSQ's new identity. This is particularly important for a scientific service where methods and technology are constantly evolving and will be critical to restoring public confidence in the forensic testing system in Queensland.

With the right resources and attitude toward change, I genuinely believe FSQ can become a world-leading forensic science service.

While we celebrate our successes to date, it is important to note that change is not always a linear process and implementation of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations has not been without its challenges. I am grateful to the staff of FSQ who have shown great perseverance and resilience in navigating the complexities of the change agenda. I am also grateful for the support of my Queensland Health, Queensland Police Service and Department of Justice and Attorney-General colleagues as well as my national and international forensic colleagues who have contributed to FSQ's successes to date.

**Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde OAM**

Chief Executive Officer, FSQ

## Introduction

On 6 June 2022, the Premier and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Premier) announced an independent Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland (Commission of Inquiry).

The Commission of Inquiry, conducted by the former President of the Court of Appeal, retired judge Mr Walter Sofronoff KC, was established to identify opportunities for improvement and ensure public confidence in the collection, testing and analysis of DNA in the criminal justice context in Queensland.

The Commission of Inquiry sought to examine whether methods, systems and processes used in the collection, testing and analysis of DNA samples in Queensland were:

- consistent with best practice; and
- if the methods, systems and processes used were deficient, to identify the reasons why.

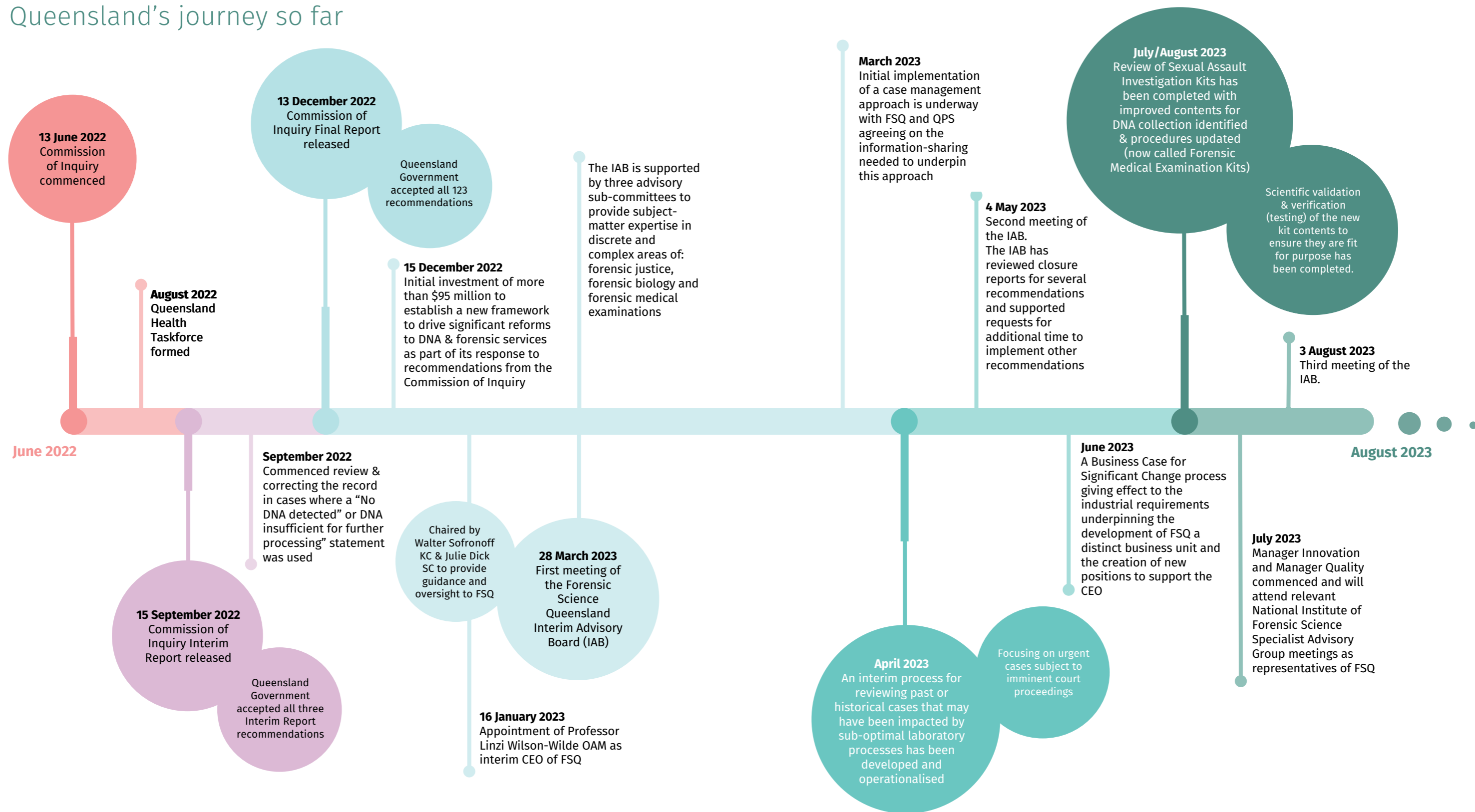
The Commission of Inquiry made over 100 recommendations. If those recommendations are implemented, with a strong focus on the laboratory's place as the expert provider of DNA evidence to the criminal justice system, the laboratory has the opportunity to become a best practice facility, in which the Queensland community can have confidence.

The achievement of best practice at the laboratory requires structural change. It was recommended that the laboratory should sit as an independent office within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and that there must be an independent and quality-minded scientist at its head, who keeps the scientific integrity of the laboratory and its purpose to serve the criminal justice system squarely in mind. Throughout the organisation, there must be new-found focus on scientific excellence, effective quality management and research and development.

While some of these recommendations could be addressed rapidly, many recommendations require significant reform. To implement them effectively will take time and there is still more to do.

This first progress report provides a snapshot of actions taken by the Queensland Government since the commencement of the Commission of Inquiry, including to address the recommendations made in the Interim and Final Reports, and highlights the continued efforts of Queensland Government agencies and stakeholders to establish a way forward for quality, timely and innovative forensic DNA services that support the integrity of the Queensland health and justice system.

## Queensland's journey so far





## Delivery of recommendations

This first progress report provides a snapshot of the activities undertaken to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland as at 22 August 2023.

### Summary

All recommendations have been accepted by the Queensland Government and **all recommendations requiring immediate cessation of current process** have been completed.

Queensland Health is the lead agency for 104 recommendations from the Final Report, as well as for five recommendations directed more broadly to the Queensland Government. Irrespective of lead agency, it should be noted that many of the recommendations impact across agencies and are inter-dependent, requiring close cross-agency collaboration and cooperation.

In addition to Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) is a key implementation partner with regard to both downstream impacts on the criminal justice system and as a future portfolio lead for forensic services in Queensland.

1. Interim Report 15 September 2022	2. Final Report 13 December 2022
3* recommendations	123* recommendations
<small>* 2 x Queensland Health, 1 x Queensland Government</small>	<small>* 104 x Queensland Health, 14 x Queensland Police Service, 5 x Queensland Government</small>

Figure 1: Recommendations summary by report and lead agency

### Interim Report

On 20 September 2022, the Commission of Inquiry issued an Interim Report making three recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Queensland Government.

The Interim Report made **three** recommendations. Two of these recommendations related to witness statements issued by Queensland Health's Forensic and Scientific Services that described samples as having "No DNA detected" (NDD) or "DNA insufficient for further processing" (DIFP) from February 2018. These descriptions were found by

the Commission of Inquiry to be inaccurate.

The first two recommendations of the Interim Report required that every such statement be (1) identified and (2) that another statement be provided correcting the relevant representation. The first of these recommendations has been completed and a total of 1,260 cases corresponding to these criteria and have been identified based on QPS data.

Implementation of the second recommendation is ongoing. As at 22 August 2023, Queensland Health had confirmed the record to be correct in 678 priority cases where QPS data recorded that a "DIFP" or a "NDD" description was used. A further 83 cases are in the process of being reviewed. The remaining 500 cases relate to historical matters and were therefore identified as appropriate to be addressed as part of the historical case review process.

The third recommendation of the Interim Report required the Queensland Government to take steps to ensure that public bodies and publicly funded bodies are resourced to investigate, consider and resolve these issues as promptly as practicable. This recommendation has been completed as part of the Queensland Government's allocation of \$95 million in December 2022.

### Final Report

The Commission of Inquiry issued a Final Report on 13 December 2022, making 123 recommendations ranging from remedial technical action, through to major systematic changes in the operations and structure of forensic DNA service delivery in Queensland.

Since the delivery of the Final Report, the relevant agencies – Queensland Health, QPS and DJAG – have been working in collaboration to implement the 123 recommendations.

Successful implementation requires strong governance support mechanisms and cross-agency engagement.

Initial implementation has focused on establishing stable interim scientific leadership and

organisational arrangements for forensic DNA

service delivery. These arrangements are a pre-requisite for the full implementation of many other recommendations, particularly those dealing with laboratory processes and procedures.

As at 22 August 2023, implementation of 57 recommendations has actively commenced with a further 33 complete. Key implementation activities include:

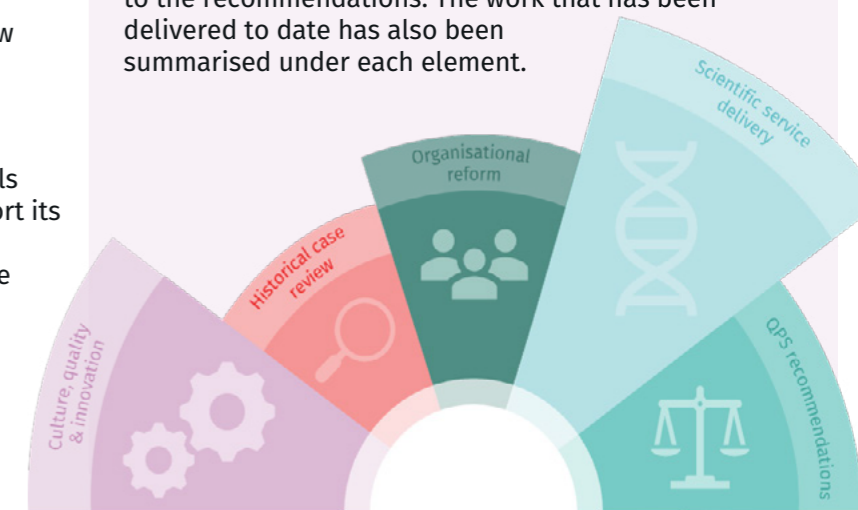
- Establishing Forensic Science Queensland (FSQ) as a business unit of Queensland Health in an administrative form that is fit for transition to another department of government.
- Establishing the FSQ interim Advisory Board and three subject matter sub-committees (for Forensic Justice, Forensic Biology and Forensic Medical Examinations).
- Recruitment of key senior leadership roles, including a Chief Executive Officer of FSQ, and new highly experienced leads in the new Manager Innovation, Manager Quality, and Manager Biology roles.
- Conducting large-scale recruitment for scientific staff across multiple position levels to ensure FSQ has the right people to support its strategic mission and form an effective and high-performing culture. These positions are critical to implementing the bulk of the scientific process recommendations.

## Our approach to implementation

This report describes implementation progress of the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations in five key focus areas, referred to as 'elements' – organisational reform; culture, quality and innovation; scientific service delivery; historical case review; and QPS recommendations.

These key focus areas or 'elements' have been developed to guide implementation but do not imply weighting or priority in terms of implementation.

For each element there is a **summary of recommendations** and the key features of the relevant focus area to be addressed in response to the recommendations. The work that has been delivered to date has also been summarised under each element.



## Element one: Organisational reform

Element one comprises 10 recommendations that are aimed toward establishing structural reform of Queensland’s forensic DNA laboratory to achieve its vision of becoming a world leader in quality, timely and innovative forensic DNA services that support the administration of justice and the integrity of the Queensland justice system.

### Summary of recommendations

6 Recommendations complete

4 Recommendations in progress

- Appointment of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is **eminent in the field of forensic DNA analysis** to lead the reform of the laboratory and appointment of a non-executive advisory board who will give expert advice and support to the CEO.
- Establishment of permanent advisory groups to **consider, monitor and advise about the best practice** of forensic medical examinations, testing of samples from forensic medical examinations, biological and DNA analysis processes, and case review processes.
- Implementation of **changes to the laboratory’s organisational structure**. This includes establishment of the new overarching structure.
- The provision of **sufficient funding** to relevant agencies to facilitate **the rapid restoration of confidence in the criminal justice system** and so that recommendations can be implemented in a timely and supported manner, utilising a best-practice approach to scientific service delivery.

### What we have delivered\*

#### Stronger forensic leadership

- Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde OAM PhD has commenced as CEO of FSQ.
- Other key leadership roles have also been established and national experts recruited, including to the positions of Manager Biology, Manager Innovation and Manager Quality (**Recommendations 70–72**).
- An FSQ Leadership Group has been established which includes the Manager Biology, Manager Innovation and Manager Quality (**Recommendation 73**).
- The role of Team Leader has been revised to Deputy Manager with strengthened leadership responsibilities (**Recommendation 35**).

#### Reformed organisational structure

An interim ‘Forensic Science Queensland’ has been established as a business unit of Queensland Health, with the creation of the following new teams:

- An Innovation team – to support the development of a strong research function to ensure and deliver high quality validation and scientific process changes in the interests of ensuring the laboratory remains contemporary in terms of scientifically valid service delivery (**Recommendation 55**).
- A Quality team – responsible for development, implementation, and application of quality management systems for FSQ including setting policy to drive best practice and overseeing the process for identification and resolution of quality issues (links to **Recommendation 47** in Element Two: Culture, Quality and Innovation).

- A Case Review team – focusing on the review of retrospective cases, and their prioritisation (links to recommendations under Element Four: Historic Case Review).

#### Stronger governance arrangements

The following governance structures have been established:

- FSQ interim Advisory Board – to oversee operations, advise on future reform and ensure the ultimate purpose of forensic DNA services in contributing to the integrity of the Queensland criminal justice system (**Recommendation 121**).
- Forensic Biology Advisory Sub-Committee – to advise on scientific and technical best practice in forensic biology and DNA service delivery (**Recommendation 122**).

- Establishment of a Forensic Justice Advisory Sub-Committee – to advise on the principles, priorities and processes for retrospective review and analysis of cases and DNA samples, and to oversee the conduct of that review and analysis.

- Establishment of a Forensic Medical Examinations Advisory Sub-Committee – to advise on best practice sexual assault forensic responses and services (**Recommendation 97**).

#### Funding

- The Queensland Government has approved an initial additional investment of \$95 million to support implementation of the recommendations. This funding has supported the recruitment of additional scientific staff and outsourcing of DNA testing (**Recommendation 123**).

\* Achievements refer to fully implemented recommendations, components of other recommendations partially implemented and other achievements not encapsulated within a formal recommendation.

## Element two: Culture, quality and innovation

Element two comprises 32 recommendations aimed at establishing a culture that is focused on the scientific integrity and excellence of the laboratory through continuous improvement, proactive compliance monitoring, effective quality management and strong sector engagement.

### Summary of recommendations

6 Recommendations complete

17 Recommendations in progress

- Establishment of a **Quality Manager role supported by a Quality Lead role** within each of the laboratory teams to provide mentorship, support quality performance, maintain contemporary knowledge, and **promote integrity of the work and results of the laboratory.**
- Amendment of various systems, policies, quality processes, standard operating procedures, reporting practices, testing, and training with a focus on scientific best practice, **to ensure effective oversight of the scientific integrity of the laboratory.**
- Development of **improved collaborative relationships with all stakeholders in the criminal justice system** including the QPS, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid Queensland and defence solicitors and barristers.
- Implementation of a **transparent system**, including training, policies, and procedures, in which **quality issues and scientific concerns raised by staff are encouraged, investigated, and addressed.**

### What we have delivered\*

#### Quality

- A dedicated Quality Team has been established, responsible for setting policy to drive best practice in relation to casework and to oversee the process for identification and resolution of quality issues. The newly established Quality Manager role has a responsibility for leading the Quality Team (**Recommendation 47**).
- The Quality Manager is FSQ's representative at the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) and the National Institute of Forensic Science (NIFS) Quality Specialist Advisory Group meetings so that they can contribute to discussion and promote learnings from the other jurisdictions (**Recommendation 69**).
- FSQ proposed to ANZPAA NIFS, through its Quality Specialist Advisory Group, that a national quality management framework be developed for quality issue investigation (**Recommendation 49**). Work on this framework is now underway.
- FSQ has implemented peer checking of spermatozoa results on microscope slides (**Recommendation 59**).
- The Team Leader role has been revised to create a Deputy Manager role to ensure effective oversight of the laboratory's processes (**Recommendation 74**).

#### Innovation

- A dedicated Innovation Team has been established and internal staff have been given the opportunity to be seconded to this team in the interests of advancing innovation projects and validations as well as contributing to their own professional development (**Recommendation 56**).

#### Culture

- A dedicated senior practitioner has been appointed as Director, Culture and Wellbeing to support FSQ staff through the significant changes made over a short period as well as promote the cultural shift required to implement the changes.
- Work has commenced on developing a Strategic Plan for FSQ as well as a values statement to inform the work of the staff of the laboratory (**Recommendation 76**).
- FSQ has also developed new branding which aligns to its new identity and vision.

#### Leadership and management capability

There has been a significant body of work to build management and leadership capability (**Recommendation 75**) at FSQ including:

- Development of a Leadership Program designed to equip FSQ's managers (current and emerging) with core supervisory and leadership skills.
- New recruits to leadership roles will be able to access a range of leadership and management tools, including opportunities for mentorship.
- The FSQ Leadership Group is providing key messages about leadership expectations and performance accountabilities which will also be reinforced through conversations around performance development.

\* Achievements refer to fully implemented recommendations, components of other recommendations partially implemented and other achievements not encapsulated within a formal recommendation.



## Element three: Scientific service delivery

Element three comprises 58 recommendations aimed at raising technical processes and practices to a best practice standard.

### Summary of recommendations

16 Recommendations complete

21 Recommendations in progress

- Implementation of changes to workflows, including a **case management approach** for major crime cases (including cold cases) and **establishment of distinct fit-for-purpose workstreams** for all types of casework reviews.
- Performance of **full and appropriate validations**, testing and/or studies to scientifically validate a range of operating processes and scientific instruments, including work currently being undertaken to facilitate implementation of Y-chromosome short tandem repeat (Y-STR) testing.
- Review procedures for reporting results, including **development of information and resources for key stakeholders** to educate the sector about laboratory results and processes.
- Redesign and implement **changes to sexual assault investigation kits, cleaning processes, and documentation protocols in line with best practice**.

### What we have delivered\*

- The QPS and FSQ have reached a formal agreement regarding sharing of information within the Forensic Register, the information management system used by QPS and FSQ, with FSQ now able to view all case records, including examination notes, photographs, exhibit records and case management entries (**Recommendation 2** with links to **Recommendation 3** in *Element five: QPS recommendations*).
- In June 2022 the laboratory ceased use of any threshold above the limit of detection for Priority 1 and major crimes cases (**Recommendation 7**) and, verification of the limit of detection continues to advance (**Recommendation 15**).
- In October 2022, reporting of any samples as 'No DNA detected' was ceased (**Recommendation 16**).
- In December 2022 the laboratory ceased the processing of all bone samples (**Recommendation 107**). FSQ has reached an agreement with the Australian Federal Police to process Queensland bone samples at no cost (this also relates to **Recommendation 106** under *Element four: Historical case review*).
- In October 2022 the laboratory conducted its report detailing testing performed to identify the Model Maker parameters for the Proflex Instruments.

This testing was performed in a pooled manner and compared to the 9700 instruments in accordance with the expert report of Dr Duncan Taylor as delivered within the COI.

Dr Taylor endorsed the laboratory's report, and the parameters were implemented into STRmix™ (**Recommendation 18**).

- The laboratory implemented changes to the treatment of extraction negative controls to ensure they undergo the same testing as the corresponding case sample at the same time (unless the sample has been exhausted) (**Recommendation 26**).
- In February 2023, three eminent Australian scientists presented a profile interpretation workshop to FSQ reporting scientists. FSQ subsequently developed and implemented an interim profile interpretation guideline modelled on the guidance obtained from the workshop.
- STRmix training has been delivered to FSQ scientists at different levels, with more workshops to follow in September 2023.
- All visitors to the FSQ Forensic Biology Unit and FSS Property Point are recorded, including their time of entry. This is in addition to the check-in completed at the general entry to the facility (**Recommendation 29**).
- A large-scale project was undertaken to overhaul the former Sexual Assault Investigation Kit and Just-In-Case Kits used across Queensland to collect evidence in cases of alleged sexual assault in light of recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry. This project resulted in the newly designed and validated Forensic Medical Examination Kits (FMEKs), which commenced state-wide roll out on 31 July 2023 (**Recommendations 86–94**).
- In consultation with Hospital and Health Service representatives, the former kits have been replaced with four modular kits:
  - Contamination reduction kit – designed to minimise the risk of contamination during forensic sampling.
  - FMEK – a single forensic DNA-grade (ISO18385:2016 compliant) 'base kit' for reference sample and evidence collection for all biological material sex, gender identity and age presentations in any setting.
  - Clothing collection Kit – a forensic DNA-grade kit that facilitates the collection of clothing at the time of examination.
  - Toxicology collection kit – a blood and urine collection kit for use in suspected drug-facilitated assaults.
- The implementation of new kits is supported by a comprehensive suite of training materials, including:
  - Forensic Medical Examination Records (FMERs) for both adult and paediatric patients
  - FMEK and FMER fact sheets and Frequently Asked Questions pamphlets
  - Handbooks and procedural videos with advice on practical issues such as sampling considerations, effective cleaning and the use of contamination reduction kits
  - Online seminars and face-to-face workshops for existing examiners and healthcare providers
  - Continued delivery of the 24/7 telephone support line by the Clinical Forensic Medicine Unit (**Recommendation 90**).

\* Achievements refer to fully implemented recommendations, components of other recommendations partially implemented and other achievements not encapsulated within a formal recommendation.

## Element four: Historical case review

Element four comprises 9 recommendations aimed at the need to work with QPS to undertake a historical case review, and to determine triaging of any cases that may require further testing. Historical case review will encompass several broad categories of sample cohorts and include assessing the need for potentially undertaking further DNA testing where appropriate.

### Summary of recommendations

1 Recommendation complete

5 Recommendations in progress

- Retrospective review of identified categories of cases and samples **to determine which cases or samples should be subject to further testing, analysis, or interpretation.**
- Review of the Standard Operating Procedures for case management to **ensure detailed information about samples that may be affected by quality incidents are included in case files.**

### What we have delivered\*

- A Case Review team has been established within both the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Queensland Health, with both teams still in the process of expanding, to focus on the review of retrospective cases and their prioritisation.
- A legal-led case review process has been developed in consultation with criminal justice system stakeholders with subsequent endorsement by the Forensic Justice Advisory Sub-Committee (partially implementing **Recommendation 44**). The legal-led process entails a legal assessment as to whether a sample is, in fact, probative in the case context overall prior to being submitted to FSQ for further scientific advice. This process has been implemented for cases currently before the courts that contain samples previously subjected to sub-optimal testing.
- A list of cases potentially requiring review has been compiled.
- Most individual elements outlined within **Recommendations 45 and 46** have now been completed by FSQ. These include:
  - Reviewing the reasoning behind the attribution of the number of contributors;
  - Confirming that there has been a systemic over-estimation of the number of contributors in sexual assault cases
  - Working with stakeholders in the criminal justice system about the potential impacts of such systemic over-estimation; and
  - Offering to review the attribution of contributors for impugned cases – specifically in relation to cases that are currently subject to prosecution.

- The Queensland Government has committed funding toward outsourcing arrangements which will assist to create additional scientific capacity to deliver the case review process.

- FSQ has completed a retrospective review of all bone and teeth samples processed by the

laboratory since 1 July 2019, where it was not possible to obtain a single source DNA profile for a comparison from the case. Samples identified as requiring re-testing have been sent to Australian Federal Police for processing (**Recommendation 106**).

*\* Achievements refer to fully implemented recommendations, components of other recommendations partially implemented and other achievements not encapsulated within a formal recommendation.*

## Element five: Queensland Police Service operations recommendations

Element five comprises 14 recommendations aimed at improving detection, presumptive screening, and subsampling activities undertaken by QPS prior to sample submission to FSQ. It is critical that these processes meet the highest standards given they impact on the success of downstream laboratory examinations. Fourteen recommendations were made by the Commission of Inquiry relating to improving case management, quality management and training activities. QPS also has some shared implementation responsibilities with Queensland Health.

### Summary of recommendations

4 Recommendations complete

10 Recommendations in progress

- Implementation of a process whereby a suitably qualified person is allocated to **review all DNA results in the context of the case** and consider whether further DNA testing or sub-sampling ought to be carried out in every case in which DNA samples are submitted.
- Performance of **validations and reviews** of relevant methods and equipment, including swab types, various wetting agents, and transport arrangements.
- Amendment of **internal policies, procedures, manuals and/or processes** to reflect changes to management of the Forensic Register and improvements in practice in various areas, including communication of DNA testing results, training, validations, internal audit, and case review.
- Provision of **training, re-fresher training and education** tailored for all relevant personnel regarding DNA collection and management.

### What we have delivered

- Changes to the Forensic Register have been completed to give case scientists complete access to information about where samples were collected and their context within the case. The information available includes all examination notes, photographs, exhibit records and case management entries (**Recommendation 3**).
- The QPS has modified its policies to ensure auditors are independent of the work unit being assessed and is planning to establish a central audit function to coordinate the process, identify trends and monitor effectiveness of corrective action (**Recommendation 79**).
- Policy requirements have been modified to expressly state that methods and critical equipment must be validated or verified prior to use (**Recommendation 82**).
- The procedure for the classification of samples as blood has been amended to prevent the potential false positive reporting of substances (**Recommendation 115**).

## Future focus

Eight months have passed since the delivery of the Final Report and significant steps have been made toward improving forensic science service delivery in Queensland. Notwithstanding the progress made over a short period, particular implementation areas, known as 'Future Focus Areas', have been identified for prioritisation as delivery continues.

Future focus areas have been geared toward those areas of reform that have been identified as necessary in achieving FSQ's vision of becoming a world leader in the delivery of high-quality, timely and innovative forensic services, that support the administration of justice and integrity within the Queensland criminal justice system.


The future focus areas for implementation of recommendations can be broadly categorised across the three agencies (Queensland Health, QPS and DJAG) as follows:

**Renewing forensic service infrastructure** through capital investments to ensure infrastructure and facilities are contemporary in nature and sufficient in size to support the ongoing delivery of forensic services in the short-term and the development of a world-leading forensic service fit for future advances in forensic science.

**Enhancing information technology platforms** and upgrading other scientific equipment, with the aim of facilitating the introduction of a 'case management' approach which will both enhance scientific interpretation of evidence and increase throughput to assist Queensland's criminal justice system in obtaining timely and relevant evidence.

**Managing current criminal justice system impacts** by resourcing all sections of the criminal justice system to respond to the potential implications from a review of approximately 30,000 cases that may have been impacted by sub-optimal forensic DNA practices.

**Strengthening the quality and scientific integrity of forensic services** through the recruitment of additional staff, investment in staff development, delivery of advanced scientific training and enhancements in research development and quality management, coupled with stronger governance guidance and oversight.



Any person who requires confidential counselling and support, including concerned victims, can contact:

**Queensland Police Service hotline:**  
**1300 993 191**  
Anytime

**Forensic Support Service:**  
**1300 349 203**  
9am – 6pm, Monday to Friday

**Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group:**  
**1800 774 744**  
Anytime

**DVConnect Sexual Assault Helpline:**  
**1800 010 120**  
7:30am – 11:30pm, 7 days a week



