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## **2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The Minister for Health announced in Parliament on 22 March 2005, that a Ministerial Taskforce on the Role and Function of Forensic and Scientific Services in the Queensland Government would be established as a matter of urgency. Establishment of the Taskforce has been a Whole-of-Government response to address issues surrounding the demand for and provision of services from Forensic and Scientific Services in Queensland Health (QH) to the criminal justice system.

In recent times there has been an increasing level of scrutiny by the media covering the delays and backlogs relating to forensic and scientific services provided to the criminal justice system. This is evidenced by cases being delayed in some instances and cases being removed from court by the judiciary due to Queensland Health Scientific Service's (QHSS) inability to provide timely analysis. As a result there has been concern at a Whole-of-Government level regarding the Government's ability to maintain and sustain public confidence to deliver forensic and scientific services to the criminal justice system.

The Ministerial Taskforce undertook four areas of review, with a view to developing strategies and an implementation plan for consideration of the Ministerial Oversight Committee. The four areas of review were as follows:

- Full Organisational Review of Forensic and Scientific Services in QH, particularly in relation to services provided to the criminal justice system;
- Analysis and evaluation of the nature, type and quantum of current and future demand for services and technologies from Forensic and Scientific Services in QH by the Queensland Police Service (QPS);
- Analysis and evaluation of the legal and legislative requirements of the Court system for services provided by Forensic and Scientific Services in QH; and
- Analysis and evaluation of alternative models of service delivery for the provision of forensic and scientific services to the criminal justice system.

This report addresses the key findings and strategies for improvement applicable to all four areas of review.

### **2.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the Ministerial Taskforce on the role and Function of Forensic and Scientific Services in the Queensland Government were as follows:

- To examine the systems and processes of government between QPS, the forensic and scientific services provided by QH and the Justice system, in particular the Court System, with a view to developing strategies for improvement and enhancement to the services provided;
- To position Forensic and Scientific Services in Government to address current and future demands and technologies, particularly as it relates to the criminal justice system;
- To identify improvements in the systems, processes, legal and legislative requirements in QPS and the criminal justice system; and
- To assist the Queensland Government to maintain and sustain public confidence in its ability to deliver forensic and scientific services to, and within the criminal justice system.

A full copy of the approved Terms of Reference including governance arrangements for the Ministerial Taskforce is attached as Appendix 1. Also included as Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5 are the approved Terms of Reference for each of the four areas of review.

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## 2.3 Methodology

The Taskforce has adopted a very consultative approach to information gathering and providing opportunities for key stakeholders to have input into the review process. Consistent with the approved proposals for each area of review it was determined that the broadest capture of information was most desirable in all instances with focus being given to areas where change and reform need to be made.

Information gathering and opportunities for input were provided but not limited to the mechanisms listed below:

- Group and individual meetings with staff and management from all levels at QHSS;
- Group and individual meetings with functional experts/groups in QPS and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG);
- Examination of documentation, correspondence, submissions and publications applicable to the areas in question;
- Analysis of lifecycles and workflows from one agency of government to another and return (e.g. QPS to QH to QPS to DJAG);
- Formal invitation for submissions and input to 47 key stakeholders across Australia. Submissions have been received from 28 stakeholders (see Appendix 6 for details);
- Analysis of a large number of unsolicited submissions;
- Expert advice and input from the Institute of Environment Sciences and Research (ESR), New Zealand and the National Institute of Forensic Science (NIFS), Melbourne;
- Statewide visits to QH, DJAG and QPS staff in Cairns, Rockhampton, Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Mt Isa and the corporate office groups applicable to specialty areas;
- Interstate visits to South Australia, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales;
- Internet searches, particularly in relation to the Forensic Science Service (FSS), United Kingdom and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Service (RCMP);
- Facilitation of inter-agency meetings and discussions addressing systemic problems and strategies for resolution;
- Meetings/briefings with contractors and consultants currently engaged by QHSS; and
- Meetings with key stakeholders as required.

The Taskforce also provided briefings to the Ministerial Oversight Committee on a monthly basis with individual briefings being provided to Ministers and Directors-General throughout the review process.

Based on the above approach this report has been designed to only address the key issues and strategies to be resolved and implemented. It is not intended that referral and/or comment will be made on every aspect of the review process unless issues are identified that need change or improvement.

The Taskforce would like to acknowledge the co-operation of both management and staff of all organisations in the completion of this review. In particular the Taskforce wishes to commend those officers who have continued to discharge their day to day responsibilities whilst assisting the Taskforce with its many and varied requests for information.