



THE CONSULTANCY BUREAU

7 October 2005

The Honourable Stephen Robertson, MP
Minister for Health
GPO Box 48
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister

I refer to your letter of 21 September 2005 in respect to the draft report of the Review of Forensic and Scientific Services in the Queensland Government.

I have now reviewed the draft report and attended separate meetings with the Task Force and the senior management team of Queensland Health Pathology and Scientific Services.

My suggestions are:-

- (i) Immediately advertise for a new Director to lead this facility (assuming the current Director is still agreeable to return to the University).
- (ii) Relocate the General Manager to Pathology Services on appointment.
- (iii) Have the new Director take charge of reforms (following consideration of all options and discussions with relevant parties).
- (iv) Prepare Scientific Services for separate existence from Pathology as soon as practical but remaining in the new Business Services Division in Queensland Health.
- (v) Actively pursue demand management strategies with the Queensland Police Service.

The salient issues which lead to these conclusions and which I consider will significantly impact on the improved performance of this centre and its ultimate structure and location are:-

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- Implementing appropriate demand management and value-for-money systems to limit the number and types of matters referred to Forensic Sciences and prioritise matters for subsequent analysis. There are some established procedures in place, but without further enhancement, demand for services will inevitably continue to exceed response capability. The review suggests eventual fee-for-service arrangements that would help to resolve this issue. However a deal of development work would be necessary to implement good costing and pricing systems so as to establish the Queensland Health Scientific Services' functions on a more commercial basis first. The review does propose some measures to better address problems associated with the demand for services exceeding the capacity to respond, including new systems to prioritise work and shift work arrangements. These could be implemented promptly if funding were available.
- There are reported to be very significant management and staffing concerns within Scientific Services units, which are perceived, at least in part, to be due to the appointment on a non-competitive basis of personnel from Pathology Services into key managerial roles within Scientific Services. The current Director of Queensland Health Scientific Services had previously indicated an intention to return to the University. Should this still be the case, then the Director's position at Scientific Services could be immediately advertised and filled. There would then be no justification to retain the position of General Manager, which could be returned to Pathology Services. The incumbent could return as well.
- The new Director would be in a good position to assess current issues within Scientific Services and lead necessary reforms, taking into account the Task Force recommendations and Pathology suggestions considered appropriate. The new Director would also be involved in the selection of a Manager for Public Health Sciences once the current incumbent retires in February 2006. Whether a new Director would wish to pursue the new structure recommended or retain a manager for each of the aggregated areas could be resolved by the Director and Director-General prior to advertising positions.
- The Manager, Forensic Sciences, is reported by senior managers in Pathology to be performing an essential leadership role to improve services. However, the Task Force does not share this viewpoint. This Manager's position could similarly be advertised and recruited in an open and competitive manner once the new Director has taken up appointment. It would be important to ensure that people with the necessary skill and expertise, quite independent from Queensland Health Pathology and Scientific Services, manage the recruitment and selection process for the new Director and then assist the Director with subsequent recruitment.



- The Queensland Health Systems Review recommended the establishment of a Business Services Board and a position of Chief Operations Officer to oversee clinical support services including Pathology and Scientific Services and a range of other clinical and business services. Scientific Services could report either to Pathology and then to COO or directly to COO without compromising the Health Review recommendations. The draft report and discussions with both the Task Force and Pathology senior managers confirm that there would be some preparatory work required with IT and other support systems to enable Scientific Services to report directly to the Chief Operations Officer. The Task Force favours this course; Pathology is opposed to this.

It might be prudent to ensure that any preparatory work to show how Scientific Services could report separately is completed by the time a new Director is appointed. The Director-General could then make the decision about preferred reporting arrangements.

- In the immediate future, Scientific Services should remain within Queensland Health, to provide the new Director with an opportunity to improve services along the lines recommended in the draft report, and to be guided as suggested by a Board or Committee of the relevant Chief Executives or nominees who rely upon these services for part of their core service delivery obligations.

The long-term models for Scientific Services have not been assessed. It appears that the options canvassed in the report could all potentially be viable (Institute, Statutory Body etc). This could be reassessed after the Director has made significant progress with new management and team arrangements and achieved improvements in performance within Scientific Services still located within Q Health Business Support Services and Clinical Services grouping within the proposed structure recommended from the Health Systems Review.

I trust that these comments are helpful in resolving immediate issues.

Yours sincerely



Peter Forster
Director

