



Corporate governance



Queensland Health is committed to maintaining high standards of corporate governance based on the four key principles of stewardship, integrity, transparency and accountability.

The Department's corporate governance framework addresses organisational structure, planning methodology, management standards and policies, and monitoring and reporting processes.

This framework aligns strategic planning, strategy development, resource allocation and service delivery with Government priorities, policy, and relevant legislation.

Strategic directions

align outputs and output measures with priority areas and areas of significant strategic importance

During 2003-04, on five occasions the Director-General chaired the Strategic Directions Group, comprising Queensland Health's senior executive staff.

As the Department's principal executive committee, this group focused on integration and coordination of strategies to address corporate priorities with a view to delivering the outcomes required by the Queensland Government and the community. The committee also provides appropriate leadership over standards and quality initiatives throughout the organisation.

The group:

- determined and coordinated Departmental priorities and business;
- set and monitored performance against strategic directions and annual plans;
- coordinated the major strategic framework relating to Government priorities; strategic plans and critical health issues; and
- guided health reform and enhancement.

Queensland Health also operated subsidiary executive committees during 2003-04 to address key strategic issues.

These committees included the:

- Queensland Health Council on Safety and Quality in Health Care;
- Health Services Council;
- Information Steering Committee;
- Strategic Asset Steering Committee;
- Audit and Risk Management Committee; and the
- Strategy, Performance and Finance Committee.

Planning for excellence

The Department's planning framework comprised the *Queensland Health Strategic Plan 2003-2007*, the *Smart State: Health 2020 Directions Statement* and the Integrating Strategy and Performance (ISAP) process.

Other key strategies included the *Queensland Health Business Plan*, the *Information Management Strategic Plan* and the *Assets Strategic Plan*, all of which were developed in accordance with the *Financial Management Standard 1997*.

The results of integrated planning are reflected in the annual Ministerial Portfolio Statements which articulate the Budget, outputs, performance measures and targets.

As reported in the 2004-05 Ministerial Portfolio Statements, Queensland Health plans to review its outputs to more closely align outputs and output measures with priority areas and areas of significant strategic importance.

Policies, procedures and accountability

Queensland Health maintains policies, practices and procedures for effective delegation of authority under the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977*. Delegations enable officers to perform their duties effectively, in accordance with legislative and policy requirements.

Queensland Health is subject to a number of external accountability and reporting measures, including Treasury reporting, audit by the Auditor-General, Cabinet Budget Review Committee processes and Parliamentary Estimates Committee hearings.

In 2003, Queensland Treasury's Goods and Services Tax (GST) Prudential Regulator undertook a review of Queensland Health's GST management arrangements

Organisation



and internal controls as part of its whole-of-government review plan. Its recommendations are being fully implemented.

During 2003-04, the Australian Taxation Office reviewed aspects of Queensland Health's GST and Pay As You Go Withholding processes. Queensland Health recognises that corporate taxation obligations are a key aspect of corporate governance and are accorded a high priority.

Up-to-date information on Queensland Health's policies and procedures is available to all staff electronically via the Queensland Health Electronic Publishing Service (QHEPS).

Risk management

Integrated risk management remains embedded across Queensland Health. In 2003-04, the Risk Management Advisory Committee was convened as a key governance body to provide advice and guidance.

Key risk activities include the endorsement of the Queensland Health Incident Management Policy and commencement of the Emergency Preparedness and Continuity Management Project.

A review of health service districts indicated that most now have risk management as a standing agenda item at their executive management meetings.

Audit and Operational Review

The Audit and Operational Review Branch (AORB) provides an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity focused on assisting the organisation to address risks. It provides a systematic and disciplined approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of management controls, risk management practices and corporate governance processes.

AORB uses risk assessment to evaluate:

- relevance, reliability and adequacy of management information;
- capability and capacity of systems to provide ongoing information and for resources to contribute to achieving Queensland Health's objectives;
- cost-effectiveness; and
- promotion of ethics in the workplace.

AORB also liaises with the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) and conducts investigations on behalf of the Director-General. An Audit and Risk Management Committee acts as an advisory body to the Director-General.

The committee meets quarterly and assists in the effective discharge of legislative and financial management responsibilities, providing independent comment, advice and counsel.

The committee liaises closely with other executive management groups and consults with the Queensland Audit Office on proposed annual audit strategies and audit fees for each year.

To maintain independence, committee membership does not include representatives of internal or external units or officers directly responsible for the Department's financial management. However, representatives may be invited to attend committee meetings to provide technical or other advice.

A regular self-assessment process was conducted during 2003-04.

Maintaining an ethical workplace

Ethical behaviour is fundamental to Queensland Health's governance. In line with the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*, Queensland Health's *Code of Conduct* sets out guiding principles, obligations and standards to promote an organisational culture of professionalism focused on client service and employee awareness.

In addition, the *Queensland Health Financial Management Practice Manual* sets out financial policy on ethical standards, potential conflicts of interest and reportable gifts.

To counter unethical behaviour and to minimise the risks associated with it, AORB has developed an Ethical Awareness Training Program.

Workshops mainly targeted at middle or line managers are being rolled out across the State. These sessions deal with AORB's functions in managing official misconduct, the responsibilities of staff in reporting official misconduct and specific problem behaviours.

At the time of reporting, information sessions had been presented to 12 health service districts, with an overwhelming level of positive feedback received by the branch. It is anticipated the delivery of all district sessions will be completed before December 2004.

promote an organisational culture of professionalism focused on client service



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Official misconduct

As well as encouraging and maintaining an environment in which professional and ethical behaviour is expected, Queensland Health acts against official misconduct under the *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001*. The Department's internal investigations team includes a seconded Queensland Police Service detective senior sergeant.

The team also investigates suspected misuse of Internet and e-mail, to maintain ethical standards and reduce pressure on the network.

During 2003-04, the unit carried out 183 investigations into matters involving suspected official misconduct and issues of concern to the Department that could give rise to disciplinary action. This compared with 170 cases in 2002-03.

Whistleblowers' Protection Act

The *Whistleblowers' Protection Act 1994 (Qld)* provides an avenue of redress for people who suffer a reprisal after lodging a "public interest disclosure", as a result of reporting alleged unlawful, improper or negligent conduct in the public sector.

During the year, 25 public interest disclosures were made to Queensland Health regarding allegations of improper conduct on a wide variety of issues, including alleged assault, theft, fraud and breach of confidentiality.

Investigations led to four substantiated and 12 unsubstantiated disclosures. Nine disclosures were still under investigation at the time of reporting.

Major outcomes

- The *Annual Audit Operational Plan 2003-04* was developed and implemented. A total of 36 audit reports were issued in the reporting period. Seven draft reports were issued to auditees as at 30 June 2004.
- A fraud prevention and ethical awareness training package was developed and delivered to 12 health service districts as the second stage of the Fraud Prevention and Control Program. About 300 district staff attended.
- A self-assessment tool was developed and distributed to district managers in support of continuous improvement.
- AORB received International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9001:2000 certification for the fifth consecutive year.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (the FOI Act), members of the community have a right to seek access to documents held by Queensland Health. By law, Queensland Health must disclose documents upon request unless there are justifiable grounds for not disclosing them.

How to apply for access to documents

Applications under the FOI Act must be made in writing to an appropriate FOI decision maker. Information about how to lodge an FOI application, a list of FOI decision makers, and fees and charges, is contained in Queensland Health's *Statement of Affairs*, available at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/publications/corporate/default.asp>.

Access to health records

Members of the community may, in most circumstances, gain access to a copy of their own health records held by a Queensland Health public hospital or community health service.

Requests for access to these records must be made in writing to the medical superintendent of the public hospital or the manager of the community health service. More information about access to health records is also contained in Queensland Health's *Statement of Affairs*.

Freedom of Information – at a glance

Personal applications received	1260
Non-personal applications received	804
Applications for amendment of personal affairs information	34
Total applications received	2098
Internal reviews made	69
External reviews made	28

Privacy

Queensland Health is committed to protecting the privacy of its patients, business partners and staff. In addition to a range of laws related to confidentiality, the Department is subject to Queensland Government Information Standard 42A (Information Privacy for the Department of Health).

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This standard applies a modified version of the National Privacy Principles found in the Commonwealth Privacy Act to personal information handled by the Department.

It is important to note however, that the Department is not subject to Commonwealth privacy legislation. Detailed information on the Department's information privacy scheme, including a copy of our privacy plan, is available on our website at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/privacy>

Complaints regarding breaches of privacy are dealt with in accordance with the Department's complaints management system. Any complaints should be raised directly with the complaints coordinator at the point of service in the first instance.

A list of complaints coordinators is attached to the Department's privacy plan at the above website. General inquiries may be directed to the Department's privacy contact officer at privacy@health.qld.gov.au

How we deliver services

Queensland Health has the State's largest operating budget and payroll of up to 64,555 staff in clinical and non-clinical roles.

The Department's facilities are found as far north as Boigu Island near our border with Papua New Guinea, west to Camooweal near the Northern Territory border, and south to Mungindi on the New South Wales border.

Our network of care operates through 37 health service districts with 202 acute care facilities, 570 non-inpatient services including mental health, oral health, community health and pathology services and in the reporting period 20 State Government residential aged care facilities.

A complete list of Queensland Health hospitals and facilities can be found at http://www.health.qld.gov.au/hospitals/facility_list.asp

As well as treating ill health, injury and disability, we also help people manage their own health needs and maintain good health.

Our services include child health and school-based

programs; aged care and home and community care for frail older people and people with disabilities; oral health; mental health; Indigenous health, and immunisation.

In addition, we fund 781 community, local government, education, church-based and special interest groups to provide the services people need in their own homes and communities.

Streamlining corporate services

The Queensland Government Shared Service Initiative is a whole-of-government approach to corporate services delivery. It aims to provide high quality, cost-effective corporate services to Queensland State Government departments.

Shared Service Providers and CorpTech were established from 1 July 2003, through the consolidation of corporate service functions from departments and existing shared service providers.

Departments are grouped into six clusters, each serviced by a dedicated shared service provider, with CorpTech providing services to all shared service providers.

On 1 December 2003, Queensland Health transferred responsibility and staff for selected corporate functions, such as human resource management, finance and procurement, to the Queensland Health Shared Service Provider (QHSSP).

The responsibility and functions for some services were transferred to CorpTech on 1 July 2003.

During the seven months from December 2003, a total of 1,671 full-time equivalent staff delivered services as part of the QHSSP at a total expense budget of \$70,085,000.

Shared services in Queensland Health encourages innovation, utilising technology and process standardisation to deliver responsive, high quality corporate services.

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