

Communiqué

February 2025

Preamble

Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee

The Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee (Committee) was established in 2017 by former Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Hon Cameron Dick MP, following the release of the whole of government *Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016 – 2021*. In 2022, the Strategy was replaced by the *Queensland Sexual Health Framework (Framework)*, supported by a series of Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections (BBV/STI) plans.

The Committee aims to facilitate a strategic approach around sexual and reproductive health between government agencies, the non-government sector, researchers, and service providers. The Committee provides advice based on current available evidence. To remain current with sector issues and emerging areas of potential advice, the Committee receives presentations and briefings on a range of matters. Core to their remit, the Committee is not a lobbyist body or an advocacy group.

The Committee is appointed for its third term, until March 2025, under the current Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, the Hon Timothy Nicholls MP.

Sexual Health Research Fund and Research Sub-Committee

The Research Subcommittee (Subcommittee) is a group of Committee members who oversee the strategic direction of the Sexual Health Research Fund (SHRF). The SHRF was established to provide seed funding for translational research activities to improve sexual health services delivery in Queensland and to support implementation of the Framework. The Subcommittee sets research priorities and reviews and makes recommendations to Queensland Health regarding SHRF grants.

The Committee is scheduled to meet quarterly, and Communiqués are generated to provide an overview of major items discussed at each meeting. This Communiqué provides an overview of the Committee meeting held on 27 February 2025.

Committee meeting overview

The Committee were pleased to welcome several guests to the final meeting of this Committee term.

Nick Steele, Deputy Director-General, Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services joined the Committee to discuss the Department of Health's proposed redesign of the governance and advisory framework for sexual health in Queensland. The redesign has been informed by a number of recent reviews and the imminent release of the updated suite of Queensland BBV/STI Plans 2030.

A decision has been made to close the Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee at the conclusion of its current term on 29 March 2025 in the context of the governance redesign and proposed additional

advisory bodies. Enquiries regarding the redesigned sexual health governance and advisory framework for Queensland and proposed advisory bodies can be directed to BBVCDU@health.qld.gov.au.

The Committee welcomed representatives from the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service to discuss their perspectives on regional challenges and opportunities for sexual health services delivery. The Committee commended the achievements and work undertaken in the previous six months by the Sexual Health Service and Public Health Unit under the leadership of Chief Executive Lisa Blackler.

Queensland Health's Public Health Intelligence Branch briefed the Committee on their Public Health Digital Plan driving innovation to deliver timely and responsive epidemiology informing health outcomes for Queenslanders. A March 2025 launch is planned for a community stakeholders' version of the HIV dashboard with positive stakeholder consultation outcomes regarding access to their own local data.

The Tropical Public Health Unit, based in the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service, provided updates on ongoing BBV/STI responses in northern and central Queensland. Key achievements demonstrate the necessity of a sustained workforce and dedicated resources to delivering successful BBV/STI responses.

Message from the Chair, Emeritus Professor Cindy Shannon AM

As we near the end of the Committee's term, I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution and commitment that has been made by members, and the fact that for most members this has been made over decades, not just the past three years.

It is important to again acknowledge the advocacy and community leadership of valued member Mr Phil Carswell OAM and the great loss to the sector following his passing, but also the legacy that he has left.

Reflecting on key Committee achievements over this and previous terms underlines the importance of our stakeholder engagement activities, which experienced challenges and interruptions through the COVID pandemic.

Perhaps the Committee's most sustained piece of work over this term has been the focus on syphilis. The Committee's stakeholder engagement forum in 2023 fast-tracked the development and delivery of the *Queensland Syphilis Action Plan 2023–2028*. Resourcing implementation and monitoring progress are now critical to achieve the plan's goals.

The Committee's impact demonstrates the importance of a robust governance structure to support strategic advice on sexual health in Queensland.

I express my thanks to all retiring members for their support and work over the last three years, along with the secretariat who have supported this work.

Sexual Health Research Fund

Round 6 of the SHRF will be held during the 2025–26 financial year.

More information on the SHRF, including a list of funded projects and information on future SHRF rounds, can be found at [Queensland Sexual Health Research Fund](#).

More information on the *Queensland Sexual Health Framework* and Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee can be found at [Queensland Sexual Health Framework](#), or contact us via email: SH_Framework@health.qld.gov.au.