

Justin Howes

A/Managing Scientist

Police Services Stream, Forensic & Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p 07 s.73 m s.73

a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108

e Justin.Howes@health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/healthsupport/businesses/forensic-and-scientific-services

RTI Release

Alison Slade

From: Alison Slade
Sent: Thursday, 25 November 2021 4:34 PM
To: Brett Bricknell
Cc: Lara Keller
Subject: DG Brief - DNA Analysis
Attachments: DG Brief DNA Analysis.docx; Attachment 3.docx; Attachment 1.pdf; Attachment 2.pdf

Hi Brett – please see attached draft DG brief and associated attachments.

We are loading into Content Manager now and will send through the details to Gemma D.

Kind regards,
Alison

RTI Release

SUBJECT: DNA analysis of samples at Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services (FSS) pertaining to the death of Shandee Blackburn in February 2013

<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	Signed...../...../..... Date...../...../..... Dr John Wakefield, Director-General, Queensland Health Comments:
<input type="checkbox"/> Not approved	
<input type="checkbox"/> Noted	
<input type="checkbox"/> Further information required (see comments)	

ACTION REQUIRED BY
No specific timeframe required.

RECOMMENDATION
It is recommended the Director-General:

- **Note** the information below in response to claims made in The Australian newspaper on 25 November 2021 regarding the DNA analysis of samples at Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services (FSS) pertaining to the death of Shandee Blackburn in February 2013 (Attachment 1).

- ISSUES**
1. The article, entitled 'Shut lab down: DNA fiasco in murder case', was issued in relation to a current podcast called 'Shandee's Story' by Hedley Thomas available through subscription to The Australian.
 2. The article featured claims made by Dr Kirsty Wright about processes and results issued by FSS Forensic DNA Analysis in relation to the death of Shandee Blackburn in February 2013. Dr Wright was formerly employed at FSS, however left the organisation in 2007.
 3. FSS refutes claims made in the article regarding the rigour and quality of testing conducted for this case.
 4. Statements of Witness were prepared for the matter (R vs PEROS) and issued on 29 September 2016, 15 December 2016 and 23 February 2017 detailing work performed by the laboratory. These statements were peer reviewed in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures. Expert evidence was provided by a gazetted DNA Analyst from Forensic DNA Analysis on 27 March 2017 in the Supreme Court in Mackay.
 5. The journalist requested that FSS respond to a series of detailed questions, s.73, Sch 3(7)
 6. FSS has subsequently prepared high-level responses to these questions (where possible in the given timeframe) for internal purposes only (Attachment 3).

BACKGROUND

7. The Forensic DNA Analysis laboratory participates in a Proficiency Testing Program and is externally audited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) in accordance with International Standards. Accreditation against ISO/IEC 17025 has consistently been achieved since 1999. Quality Assurance procedures including, but not limited to, audit and calibration schedules, use of Quality control samples (positive and negative controls), peer reviewing of results, and a competency-based training program are key components to the Quality System within Forensic DNA Analysis. All results generated by the laboratory are peer-reviewed before release to the Qld Police Service. The laboratory conducts further testing upon request from QPS.

8. Sch 3(10)(1)

9.

10.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

11. FSS consulted with s.73, Sch 3(7)
12. FSS also consulted with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) Forensic Services Group in the preparation of a media response. FSS maintains a very close working relationship with QPS, including in the management of sample submission and DNA analysis

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no resource or financial implications associated with this brief.

SENSITIVITIES/RISKS

14. Additional media coverage is expected following the publication of the article in The Australian and the release of the associated podcast episode. The Media Unit, Strategic Communications Branch, have been approached by additional media outlets in relation to this article, s.73, Sch 3(7)

15. s.47(3)(b)

ATTACHMENTS

16. Attachment 1. Article: "Shut lab down: DNA fiasco in murder case", The Australian, 25 November 2021.

17. Attachment 2. Questions from Journalist, Hedley Thomas, The Australian

18. Attachment 3. Responses to questions (for internal purposes)

Author	Cleared by (Dir/Snr Dir)	Cleared by (Dir/Snr Dir)	Content verified by (DG/CE)
Name: Alison Slade Position: Principal Advisor Unit: Forensic and Scientific Services Tel No: s.73 Date Drafted: 25 November 2021	Name: Lara Keller Position: A/Executive Director Branch: Forensic and Scientific Services Tel No: s.73 Date Cleared: 25 November 2021 <i>*Note clearance contact is also key contact for brief queries*</i>	Name: Brett Bricknell Position: General Manager Branch: PQ & FSS Tel No: Date Cleared: <i>*Note clearance contact is also key contact for brief queries*</i>	Name: Prof Keith McNeil Position: Insert text Division: Insert text Tel No: Insert text Date Verified: Insert text

news

From: news
Sent: Thursday, 25 November 2021 7:04 PM
To: John Wakefield
Cc: Kirsten MacGregor; Ben Armstrong; Dawn Schofield; news
Subject: DG Daily Media Wrap - 25 November 2021
Attachments: RE: Ch7 query - alleged lab failures in Shandee Blackburn murder investigation; **s.73**

Good evening DG,

Hot issues

Please find below today's media wrap up, highlighting significant media enquiries or issues:

- A Current Affair, Seven News, Courier Mail, ABC: Enquired about journalist Hedley Thomas' story about Shandee Blackburn. Journalists wanted to know whether Health would be investigating the lab's processes and whether Health was confident in its labs. All journalists were given the same response provided to The Australian. Response is attached.



s.73



Queensland
Government

Media and Issues Team

Strategic Communication Branch | Queensland
Health

P s.73
E news@health.qld.gov.au
W health.qld.gov.au
A [33 Charlotte St, Brisbane](#)

RTI Release

Kirsten MacGregor

From: Dawn Schofield
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 8:20 AM
To: Yvette s.73 @ministerial.qld.gov.au; Simon Zanatta (s.73 @ministerial.qld.gov.au)
Cc: John Wakefield; Kirsten MacGregor
Subject: Shandee Blackburn
Attachments: RE: Questions - Shandee Blackburn case - forensics - QHFSS.eml

Hi Minister,

Please see attached incoming media enquiry and Departmental response.

Thanks
Dawn

Dawn Schofield
Executive Director
Office of the Director-General and System Strategy Division
Mobile: s.73
Email: s.73 @health.qld.gov.au

RTI Release

From: [news](#)
To: thomash@theaustralian.com.au
Cc: [news](#); murrayd@theaustralian.com.au
Subject: RE: Questions - Shandee Blackburn case - forensics - QHFSS
Date: Wednesday, 24 November 2021 12:12:23 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)

Hi Hedley,

Queensland Health has looked into what we are able to get for you on your enquiry, and unfortunately the Forensic and Scientific Services is unable to comment on the specifics of individual cases without first undertaking a full privacy assessment and ensuring that the case is not currently active.

The age of the case, the complexity of the questions you asked, and the detailed information you are seeking would also require a significant amount of research and investigation before a detailed response could be provided. This would not be possible in the timeframe you have requested. It is recommended that you submit a Right To Information Request if detailed information is still required.

I understand you spoke to one of my team members on the phone this morning. We do not accept being spoken to that way and I urge you to conduct yourself professionally and courteously in future if you'd like assistance from Queensland Health. I do hope we can work better together in the future.

Please attribute the following to a Queensland Health spokesperson:

The role of Forensic and Scientific Services is to provide analysis to the Queensland Police Service and provide professional evidence in Court describing that analysis.

ENDS

Cheers,
Kat



Media and Issues Team
 Strategic Communications Branch |
 Queensland Health

P (07) s.73
E news@health.qld.gov.au
W health.qld.gov.au
A L3, 33 Charlotte Street, Brisbane

[campaign image](#)

Queensland Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

From: Thomas, Hedley <thomash@theaustralian.com.au>

Sent: Thursday, 18 November 2021 2:18 PM
To: news <news@health.qld.gov.au>
Cc: David Murray <murrayd@theaustralian.com.au>
Subject: Questions - Shandee Blackburn case - forensics - QHFSS

Hi

My name is Hedley Thomas and I've been investigating the stabbing murder in February 2013 of Shandee Renee Blackburn, 23, in Mackay.

The investigation is being published by The Australian as a podcast - called Shandee's Story - and in related articles in The Australian newspaper and digital site under the byline of my colleague David Murray who is copied on this email.

Part of the investigation of this case relates to the forensic work and testing for DNA by scientists at the Queensland Health forensic laboratory.

I seek responses to the following questions by next Tuesday 23 November. By noon if possible - however, if you need more time to 5pm that's fine.

Please refer these questions to the forensic laboratory. The reporting scientist involved at the time in Shandee Blackburn's murder investigation was Rhys Parry.

My mobile number is 0417 797 419. I look forward to your written responses.

Regards
Hedley Thomas

Q1: Can QHFSS DNA experts explain why a majority of samples from the vehicle of John PEROS were not analysed past the quantitation step (labelled in part V1 to V51)?

Q2: What criteria is used by the QHFSS DNA laboratory to assess whether analysis of samples from a major crime should be either stopped after quantitation or fully tested?

Q3: Under what circumstances is it possible for a crime scene sample to have no DNA detected at the quantitation stage, to then be fully tested resulting in the generation of a reportable DNA profile?

Q4: Did this occur and, if yes, how many times did it occur in the case of Shandee Blackburn?

Q5: If yes in one or more instances, why weren't all vehicle samples - and all crime scene samples - which were initially reported as 'no DNA detected' further analysed?

Q6: Would a Combur positive swab taken from a pool of blood at a crime scene by a Scientific Officer only hours after a homicide be expected to produce a DNA profile?

Q7: Can QHFSS DNA experts explain why no DNA was detected from the sample a QPS Scientific Officer stated had come from a pool of blood, and which he labelled as 'S14: Swab of blood from gutter on Boddington Street' (barcode 572572940)?

Q8: What do you say to the suggestion that issues arising from the introduction of

PowerPlex 21 and STRmix in December 2012 had a detrimental impact on the laboratory's profiling of samples for DNA in this case in the weeks and months afterwards?

Q9: Did any of the scientists in the QHFSS DNA laboratory express concerns to management over unusual or poor results being obtained in the case of Shandee Blackburn by PowerPlex 21 after it was implemented?

Q10: Was the QHFSS DNA laboratory experiencing any difficulties interpreting mixtures from crime scene samples during the period samples from QPS1300165446 were being analysed?

Q11: Can QHFSS DNA experts explain why the following DNA mixtures from QPS1300165446 were reported as 'Incorrect result' to the QPS? 572573268 (on 24/09/2014); 572984091 (on 03/04.2013); 572984407 (on 03/04/2013); and 572984416 (on 28/03/2013).

Q12: Is it unusual for the QHFSS DNA laboratory to report incorrect results to the QPS? If yes, please explain why so many incorrect results were reported to the QPS for QPS1300165446? If no, please provide how many samples were reported as 'Incorrect result' in 2013 and 2014.

Q13: Were the QPS or any members of the Queensland criminal justice system made aware that there may be DNA profiling issues affecting the reliability of results previously reported as 'no DNA detected' for QPS1300165446? If yes, please provide a copy of the communication/s, including the date of the advice and who it was directed too? If no, please explain why this did not occur.

Q14: Did the QHFSS DNA laboratory provide any other advice (apart from suggesting the possible 'presence of bacteria') to the QPS explaining why DNA profiles weren't being obtained when they were expected to for QPS1300165446? If yes, please provide that advice, including the date of the advice and to whom it was directed.

Q15: Can a QHFSS DNA expert explain how samples relating to QPS1300165446 that were correctly packaged, correctly stored, and well-preserved fail to produce a profile due to the purported presence of bacteria?

--

HEDLEY THOMAS

National Chief Correspondent

Cnr Mayne Road & Campbell Street Bowen Hills QLD 4006

T +61 7 3666 7463 M +61 417 797 419

E thomash@theaustralian.com.au W theaustralian.com.au

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land in all states and territories on which we work and report. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging, and honour their history, cultures, and traditions of storytelling.

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RTI Release

From: [FSS Library Reference](#)
To: [Alison Slade](#); [Amy Jennison](#); [Carol Church](#); [Cathie Allen](#); [Charles Naylor](#); [Damien Cass](#); [Deborah Whelan](#); [Drew Watson](#); [Frederick Moore](#); [Georgina Patterson](#); [Gino Micalizzi](#); [Helen Gregg](#); [Helene Jacmon](#); [Katherine Hopewell](#); [Kirsten Scott](#); [Lara Keller](#); [Lee Smythe](#); [Mark Stephenson](#); [Mitchell Shaw](#); [Sandy Sinclair](#); [Stewart Carswell](#); [Trish Murphy](#); [Peter Culshaw](#); [Alex Olumbe](#); [Tatiana Komarova](#); [Amy Jennison](#); [Sanmarie Schlebusch](#)
Subject: Shandee Blackburn DNA reporting - FSS in the news
Date: Friday, 26 November 2021 9:22:23 AM
Attachments: [Media reports from AM 25 26 Nov 2022.docx](#)

Various

The family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning of “critical errors” made by a pathology lab that could have foiled the hunt for her killer.

Articles attached:

'Critical errors': Lab fail exposed in Shandee Blackburn murder case

Forensic biologist labels Shandee Blackburn's murder investigation a 'forensic train wreck'

Shandee Blackburn murder: family seeks inquiry as 'DNA failures' exposed

Lab tests under fire

Kind regards, Trish

Trish Murphy

Team Leader (Library)

Information Research Services, Forensic and Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p (07) **s.73**

a Block 1, Level 1, 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains Q 4108

e **s.73** [@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:trish.murphy@health.qld.gov.au) **w** www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

Queensland Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Lab tests under fire

Courier Mail, Brisbane by Elise Williams
General News - Page 24 - 324 words - ID 1544744508 - Photo: Yes - Type: News Item -
Size: 401.00cm²

26 Nov 2021

Claims of 'critical errors' in Blackburn murder evidence

THE family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning the pathology lab tasked with processing evidence from her unsolved case failed to return adequate DNA findings, potentially foiling the hunt for her killer.

Shandee's mother Vicki and sister Shannah, alongside the former national head of Australia's criminal DNA database, Dr Kirsty Wright, are urging the Queensland government to hand over all DNA samples and records from Shandee's 2013 stabbing death in Mackay to an independent facility.

Dr Wright, who has been analysing the findings and official documents from the investigation into Shandee's death, said she has never seen a case handled so poorly.

"(There were) critical errors that I believe may have prevented the offender from Shandee's murder from being identified," she said.

Shandee's case has been in the public eye following the release of Shandee's Story, a podcast by The Australian's national chief correspondent Hedley Thomas.

Dr Wright, who contributes to the podcast, has recently identified multiple errors in the handling of evidence by the Queensland Health-run lab.

Dr Wright said the lab failed to find any trace of DNA on a car owned by Shandee's ex-boyfriend John Peros, who was charged and since acquitted of Shandee's death. He has denied any involvement in her murder.

Mr Peros' car had been driven many thousands of kilometres by Shandee's ex-partner, however none of the 33 samples retrieved from the car found the driver's own DNA inside the vehicle.

Lawyer Kristy Bell, who represented Shandee and her family at a 2019 inquest into her death said there must be an investigation into the lab.

A Queensland Health spokesperson said: "The role of Forensic and Scientific Services is to provide analysis to the Queensland Police Service and provide professional evidence in court describing that analysis."

Shandee's family seeks inquiry as 'DNA failures' exposed

The Australian, Australia by David Murray And Charlie Peel
 General News - Page 1 - 1172 words - ID 1544761657 - Photo: Yes - Type: News Item -
 Size: 887.00cm²

26 Nov 2021

Murder victim Shandee Blackburn's family is demanding immediate retesting of forensic evidence in the case, and a full inquiry to determine the extent to which other crimes have been affected by a litany of major errors and problems in Queensland's government-run laboratory.

Legal and academic figures have backed the family's call for a thorough investigation into the laboratory, as more serious failures in the handling of Blackburn's unsolved stabbing murder are revealed. Mistakes in the lab identified by forensic scientist Kirsty Wright will undermine confidence in Queensland's legal system and jeopardise prosecutions until investigated, criminal defence lawyers and former police say. As the Health Department refuses to answer questions about its laboratory, Blackburn's mother, Vicki, and sister Shannah said they were shocked after learning of the forensics failures that may have helped her killer get away with murder.

Vicki Blackburn said the many concerns raised in investigative podcast series Shandee's Story, examining her daughter's slaying as she walked home from work in Mackay in 2013, were not isolated and had been going on for a long time. "What I'm asking is for the Queensland government to immediately hand over all samples and records from Shandee's case to an independent, fully qualified facility for retesting to be carried out with the utmost urgency," she said. "You can't sweep this under the carpet. This needs to be sorted out for every case." Vicki and Shannah Blackburn joined Dr Wright, the family's lawyer, Kristy Bell, and The Australian's Hedley Thomas, who has been investigating the murder for the podcast, in a media conference in Brisbane to call on the state government to act.

Dr Wright outlined some of her findings and her conclusion that the government laboratory's results could not be trusted. "Quite simply, I've never seen a case done so poorly," she said.

Ms Bell said the revelations would have an "astronomical" impact on the state's criminal justice system. "Probably the closest comparison I can think of is the 'Lawyer X' scandal that's taken place in Victoria," she said. "We really have no idea what the potential is for the impact on other cases." Ms Bell backed the calls by the family and Dr Wright for an independent inquiry, and said the first step for Blackburn's case was to have forensic samples retested.

There was a "real potential" of people being convicted for offences of which they were innocent, or of the guilty walking free, she said, "so it is in the public interest this be thoroughly investigated." Defence lawyer Nick Dore said the "concerning" doubts engulfing forensics "could potentially undermine a fair trial and be disastrous for both victims and for the accused".

"There is a perception that a Continued on Page 6 SHANDEE'S STORY Three episodes this week EPISODE 8 OUT NOW

Continued from Page 1 lack of forensics weakens a case and large amounts strengthen a case," Mr Dore said.

Former Queensland Law Society president Bill Potts said juries relied on the independent and expert evidence of scientists.

"The questions being asked are serious, and a serious response should be undertaken to ensure the integrity of results and integrity of evidence before the courts," Mr Potts said.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said on Thursday she would receive a briefing from police before commenting.

Her deputy, Steven Miles, said he was unaware of any issues with the laboratory when he was health minister from 2017 to last year. "You've got to give us a chance to see what's been said.

This is the first I've heard of it," Mr Miles said.

In the latest revelation from the podcast, Dr Wright said in the weeks after the murder, the laboratory had "incredibly" found no DNA on a high-priority sample taken from Blackburn's arm that would have contained many hundreds of her own skin cells.

Dr Wright said there should have been "alarm bells ringing" in the lab after the testing did not detect DNA in the forearm sample.

"Without any question, you should get a DNA profile (in that type of sample) 100 per cent of the time," she said.

Sixteen months later, in July 2014, the lab conducted more testing of the same sample and detected mixed DNA from multiple people but could not interpret who they were.

"That's critical because it shows that at the time a majority of the samples from Shandee's case were being analysed, there were flaws in the system.

"This sample proves that," Dr Wright said. "Further, it shows that the laboratory knew that. In 2014, the laboratory knew there were flaws in their processes." At that point, the lab should have gone back and retested 43 other samples from Blackburn's case that they hadn't fully tested, Dr Wright said.

To collect the forearm sample, police used a special kind of sticky tape, firmly pressing on the skin six to 12 times. Each press would have transferred hundreds of cells from Blackburn's skin, Dr Wright said.

"If an offender had come into contact or gripped her arm at the time of the attack, potentially some of the offender's cells may have transferred across to Shandee's skin.

"What other samples that could contain the offender's DNA are they not detecting? What's going wrong within that lab?" It was previously revealed the lab failed to detect trace DNA of suspect John Peros in his own dirty vehicle, and failed to detect DNA in a sample from a pool of blood.

Dr Wright said the Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services lab should be

suspended until it was independently reviewed.

"We can't, in my opinion and based on what I've observed, trust . any of the DNA results coming out of this lab," Dr Wright told the podcast.

"If a lab is making mistakes, they could potentially help to send an innocent person to jail or help to acquit somebody that's guilty.

"At best, I believe the lab has been negligent . at worst, in my opinion, I think they've been obstructive in relation to assisting the police in resolving this case." Dr Wright, a forensic biologist and former head of the nation's criminal DNA database, is confident after reading hundreds of pages of relevant documents that major changes to the lab's equipment and software introduced just weeks before Blackburn's murder interfered with its ability to generate DNA profiles.

Criminologist and former detective Terry Goldsworthy said Dr Wright's concerns should be "immediately looked at", as any doubts about forensics would be a blow to the justice system's legitimacy.

"Deficiencies should be fixed immediately, otherwise they're opening up a Pandora's box," Dr Goldsworthy said.

Shandee Blackburn murder: family seeks inquiry as 'DNA failures' exposed

- [David Murray](#)

National Crime Correspondent

[Charlie Peel](#)

Journalist

[@charliepeeled](#)

Murder victim Shandee Blackburn's family is demanding immediate retesting of forensic evidence in the case, and a full inquiry to determine the extent to which other crimes have been affected by a litany of major errors and problems in Queensland's government-run laboratory.

Legal and academic figures have backed the family's call for a thorough investigation into the laboratory, as more serious failures in the handling of Blackburn's unsolved stabbing murder are revealed. Mistakes in the lab identified by forensic scientist Kirsty Wright will undermine confidence in Queensland's legal system and jeopardise prosecutions until investigated, criminal defence lawyers and former police say. As the Health Department refuses to answer questions about its laboratory, Blackburn's mother, Vicki, and sister Shannah said they were shocked after learning of the forensics failures that may have helped her killer get away with murder.

Vicki Blackburn said the many concerns raised in investigative podcast series Shandee's Story, examining her daughter's slaying as she walked home from work in Mackay in 2013, were not isolated and had been going on for a long time.

"What I'm asking is for the Queensland government to immediately hand over all samples and records from Shandee's case to an independent, fully qualified facility for retesting to be carried out with the utmost urgency," she said. "You can't sweep this under the carpet. This needs to be sorted out for every case."

Vicki and Shannah Blackburn joined Dr Wright, the family's lawyer, Kristy Bell, and The Australian's Hedley Thomas, who has been investigating the murder for the podcast, in a media conference in Brisbane to call on the state government to act.

Dr Wright outlined some of her findings and her conclusion that the government laboratory's results could not be trusted. "Quite simply, I've never seen a case done so poorly," she said.

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that's taken place in Victoria," she said. "We really have no idea what the potential is for the impact on other cases."

Ms Bell backed the calls by the family and Dr Wright for an independent inquiry, and said the first step for Blackburn's case was to have forensic samples retested.

There was a "real potential" of people being convicted for offences of which they were innocent, or of the guilty walking free, she said, "so it is in the public interest this be thoroughly investigated."

Dr Kirsty Wright has been a valued and trusted scientist for the Queensland Government and a consultant for numerous state and federal agencies.

Her work in forensics after the 2002 Bali Bombings, and then in 2005 as DNA Team Leader for the International Disaster Victim Identification effort in Thailand after the Boxing Day tsunami, is acknowledged as gold-standard.

Dr Wright was awarded a prestigious Churchill Fellowship to investigate methods of identifying missing people in the US and UK.

She led the expansion of the National Criminal Investigation DNA Database for federal agency CrimTrac in 2007, and the Queensland Skeletal Remains Project, dedicated to identifying long-term missing persons.

She spent several years in the Queensland Health forensic biology laboratory, starting out as a technician doing hands-on laboratory work generating DNA profiles.

Within about a year she was promoted to a reporting scientist who would receive from police bags full of evidence such as t-shirts and weapons and examine them for blood, semen and saliva.

She went on to spend about nine years in academia, teaching forensic science at Griffith University, and was also program director of the Master of Science in Forensic Science, Crime Scene Examination.

There, she facilitated research by Queensland police to improve their crime scene examination processes.

Dr Wright is also an officer in the Royal Australian Air Force and has worked in remote jungles and historical battlefields to identify missing Australian soldiers from WWI and WWII and the Korean War.

She has a high-level Australian Government security clearance and assists in improving forensic capabilities for current conflicts.

She was integral in working out the best scientific method to identify the degraded and fragile skeletal remains of abducted 13-year-old Queensland boy Daniel Morcombe.

Defence lawyer Nick Dore said the "concerning" doubts engulfing forensics "could potentially undermine a fair trial and be disastrous for both victims and for the accused".

“There is a perception that a lack of forensics weakens a case and large amounts strengthen a case,” Mr Dore said.

Former Queensland Law Society president Bill Potts said juries relied on the independent and expert evidence of scientists.

“The questions being asked are serious, and a serious response should be undertaken to ensure the integrity of results and integrity of evidence before the courts,” Mr Potts said.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said on Thursday she would receive a briefing from police before commenting.

Her deputy, Steven Miles, said he was unaware of any issues with the laboratory when he was health minister from 2017 to last year. “You’ve got to give us a chance to see what’s been said. This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Mr Miles said.

In the latest revelation from the podcast, Dr Wright said in the weeks after the murder, the laboratory had “incredibly” found no DNA on a high-priority sample taken from Blackburn’s arm that would have contained many hundreds of her own skin cells.

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“If an offender had come into contact or gripped her arm at the time of the attack, potentially some of the offender’s cells may have transferred across to Shandee’s skin.

“What other samples that could contain the offender’s DNA are they not detecting? What’s going wrong within that lab?”

It was previously revealed the lab failed to detect trace DNA of suspect John Peros in his own dirty vehicle, and failed to detect DNA in a sample from a pool of blood.

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“If a lab is making mistakes, they could potentially help to send an innocent person to jail or help to acquit somebody that’s guilty.

“At best, I believe the lab has been negligent ... at worst, in my opinion, I think they’ve been obstructive in relation to assisting the police in resolving this case.”

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Criminologist and former detective Terry Goldsworthy said Dr Wright’s concerns should be “immediately looked at”, as any doubts about forensics would be a blow to the justice system’s legitimacy.

“Deficiencies should be fixed immediately, otherwise they’re opening up a Pandora’s box,” Dr Goldsworthy said.

‘Critical errors’: Lab fail exposed in Shandee Blackburn murder case

The family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning of “critical errors” made by a pathology lab that could have foiled the hunt for her killer.



[Elise Williams](#)

[@elisenwilliams](#)

2 min read

November 25, 2021 - 8:11PM

The family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning the pathology lab tasked with processing evidence from her unsolved murder failed to return adequate DNA findings, potentially foiling the hunt for her killer.

Shandee's mother Vicki and sister Shannah, alongside the former national head of Australia's criminal DNA database, Dr Kirsty Wright, are urging the Queensland Government to immediately hand over all DNA samples and records from Shandee's 2013 stabbing death to an independent facility.

Dr Wright, who has been analysing the findings and official documents from the investigation into Shandee's death, said she has never seen a case handled so poorly.

"(There were) critical errors that I believe may have prevented the offender from Shandee's murder from being identified," she said.

"Quite simply I've never seen a case done so poorly."

Shandee's case has been in the public eye following the release of Shandee's Story- a podcast by The Australian's national chief correspondent, Hedley Thomas.

Dr Wright, who contributes to the podcast, has recently identified multiple errors in the handling of evidence by the Queensland Health-run lab.

Dr Wright said the lab failed to find any trace of DNA on a car owned by Shandee's former boyfriend John Peros, who was charged - and since acquitted - of Shandee's death.

He has denied any involvement in her murder.

Mr Peros' car had been driven many thousands of kilometres by Shandee's ex partner, however none of the 33 samples tested after being retrieved from the car found the driver's own DNA inside the vehicle.

Similarly, Dr Wright said two key items seized by police were not properly tested by the lab.

"There was two knives that were handed into the lab by police- critical items from a stabbing murder.

"The lab did not fully test those samples ... I am truly worried that there's other cases that should have been resolved but may not have been because of critical errors."

Vicki and Shannah only learned the lab may have failed in their duty to properly conduct DNA pathology yesterday.

"We are in utter shock this could happen in Australia," Shandee's mum Vicki Blackburn said.

While her sister begged for the truth to be revealed and for Shandee's killer to be identified.

"We have only ever stood up and asked for the truth, yet we have been denied over and over again," Shannah said.

“Its difficult to fathom that we have to stand here and beg for the truth, but if this is what it takes – here I am begging.”

Dr Wright said it was of her belief the scope of errors across the entire DNA profiling process in relation to the case would have been apparent to the lab scientists.

“What was happening inside that laboratory in 2013?,” Dr Wright said.

“Those questions absolutely need answers. Otherwise the police, the courts and the general members of the community cannot trust any further DNA results coming out of that laboratory, they simply cannot trust it.

“In my professional opinion, I cannot trust any DNA profiles the laboratory generated for Shandee’s case.

Criminal lawyer Kristy Bell, who represented Shandee and her family at a 2019 inquest into her death said there must be an investigation into the lab.

A Queensland Health spokesperson said: “The role of Forensic and Scientific Services is to provide analysis to the Queensland Police Service and provide professional evidence in Court describing that analysis.”

Forensic biologist labels Shandee Blackburn's murder investigation a 'forensic train wreck'

[ABC Tropical North](#)

/ By [Tobi Loftus](#)

Posted 14h ago14 hours ago

The family of murdered Mackay woman Shandee Blackburn has called for an independent inquiry into a state government-run forensic laboratory over its handling of evidence.

Key points:

- A forensic biologist has reviewed hundreds of documents as part of a podcast series into Shandee Blackburn's murder
- She says the case was a "forensic train wreck"
- Ms Blackburn's family has called for an inquiry into the handling of the forensic material

The 23-year-old was walking home from work in the early hours of February 9, 2013, when she was brutally stabbed more than 20 times.

No-one has been found guilty of her murder.

Independent forensic biologist Dr Kirsty Wright has reviewed hundreds of forensic files from the murder investigation recently for The Australian newspaper's podcast series Shandee's Story.

Speaking to media today, she said the case was a "forensic train wreck".

"What I've found is quite unbelievable," she said.

Dr Wright said there were errors throughout the DNA profiling process done by the Queensland Health laboratory.

"Critical errors that may have prevented the offender from Shandee's murder from being identified," she said.

"An example being a DNA swab that was collected from a fresh pool of blood from the gutter where Shandee was killed, and the laboratory could not obtain a DNA sample from that sample.

"If a laboratory cannot get a DNA profile from a fresh pool of blood, how can it get a DNA profile from trace evidence that could assist the police in resolving this matter."

No DNA in car

Ms Blackburn's former partner John Peros was found [not guilty of her murder by a Supreme Court jury in a 12-day trial in 2017](#).

In August 2020, Coroner David O'Connell found there was ample evidence [that showed Mr Peros killed Ms Blackburn](#) and there was no other possible conclusion that could be drawn based on the evidence.

Mr Peros has [maintained his innocence](#).

Dr Wright said there were "more concerning" issues with forensic evidence relating to Mr Peros.

"A total of 51 samples from John Peros' vehicle was collected and sent to the laboratory," Dr Wright said.

"33 of those samples were tested and incredibly none of the driver's DNA was found in his own vehicle that was observed by the scientific officer as not being clean.

"No DNA from the steering wheel, no DNA from the gear stick, no DNA from the handbrake."

'Systemic errors'

She said there were also 17 incorrect results that were released from the laboratory as part of the investigation that incorrectly linked people to crime scene samples taken from Shandee's clothing.

"For even one incorrect result to be released from a laboratory is inexcusable, but in this case there were 17," she said.

"There was something very, very wrong happening within that laboratory.

"All of the samples need to be retested by another laboratory and I believe that there has to be a public inquiry.

"I don't believe other cases may have been spared these issues and I think these are potentially systemic errors and what we're seeing with Shandee's case may be the tip of a very large iceberg."

Ms Blackburn's mother Vicki Blackburn echoed Dr Wright's call for an inquiry and said evidence needed to be retested as a matter of "utmost urgency".

"We are in utter shock that this could happen in Australia, not only to the samples in Shandee's case, but to the potentially hundreds of more cases tested by this laboratory," she said.

"This is not something that can be excused away, allowed to be swept under the carpet, silenced or shrugged off.

"This is totally unacceptable. This is shameful."

Investigation needed for 'public interest'

Criminal lawyer Kristy Bell, who represented the Blackburn family in the coronial inquest, said it was vitally important the evidence get re-tested in case it brought new evidence to light.

"An assessment can then be made about whether or not an application could be made by the Department of Public Prosecutions to have a person re-tried," Ms Bell said.

She said Dr Wright's analysis could have an "astronomical impact" on the legal system in Queensland.

"There is real potential for people who are innocent of crimes of which they've been convicted are sitting in prison serving sentences, and alternatively there are those who may have been acquitted or not even charged with offences for which they are responsible," she said.

"It is in the public interest that this be thoroughly investigated."

A Queensland Health spokesperson said they could not comment on individual cases.

"The role of Forensic and Scientific Services is to provide analysis to the Queensland Police Service and provide professional evidence in court describing that analysis," the spokesperson said.

From: [Lara Keller](#)
To: [Neville.DavidH\[OSC\]](#)
Subject: FW: Shandee Blackburn DNA reporting - FSS in the news
Date: Friday, 26 November 2021 12:14:00 PM
Attachments: [Media reports from AM 25 26 Nov 2022.docx](#)

FYI

From: FSS Library Reference <F [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 9:22 AM
To: Alison Slade [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Amy Jennison [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Carol Church [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Cathie Allen <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Charles Naylor [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Damien Cass [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Deborah Whelan [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Drew Watson [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Frederick Moore [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Georgina Patterson [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Gino Micalizzi [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Helen Gregg [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Helene Jacmon [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Katherine Hopewell [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Kirsten Scott [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Lara Keller [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Lee Smythe [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Mark Stephenson [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Mitchell Shaw [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Sandy Sinclair [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Stewart Carswell [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Trish Murphy [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Peter Culshaw <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Alex Olumbe [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Tatiana Komarova [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Amy Jennison [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Sanmarie Schlebusch [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Shandee Blackburn DNA reporting - FSS in the news

Various

The family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning of “critical errors” made by a pathology lab that could have foiled the hunt for her killer.

Articles attached:

‘Critical errors’: Lab fail exposed in Shandee Blackburn murder case

Forensic biologist labels Shandee Blackburn's murder investigation a 'forensic train wreck'

Shandee Blackburn murder: family seeks inquiry as ‘DNA failures’ exposed

Lab tests under fire

Kind regards, Trish

[REDACTED]

Trish Murphy

Team Leader (Library)

Information Research Services, Forensic and Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p (07) **s.73** [REDACTED]

a Block 1, Level 1, 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains Q 4108

e **s.73** [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au **w** www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

Queensland Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

RTI Release

Lab tests under fire

Courier Mail, Brisbane by Elise Williams
General News - Page 24 - 324 words - ID 1544744508 - Photo: Yes - Type: News Item -
Size: 401.00cm²

26 Nov 2021

Claims of 'critical errors' in Blackburn murder evidence

THE family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning the pathology lab tasked with processing evidence from her unsolved case failed to return adequate DNA findings, potentially foiling the hunt for her killer.

Shandee's mother Vicki and sister Shannah, alongside the former national head of Australia's criminal DNA database, Dr Kirsty Wright, are urging the Queensland government to hand over all DNA samples and records from Shandee's 2013 stabbing death in Mackay to an independent facility.

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Shandee's case has been in the public eye following the release of Shandee's Story, a podcast by The Australian's national chief correspondent Hedley Thomas.

Dr Wright, who contributes to the podcast, has recently identified multiple errors in the handling of evidence by the Queensland Health-run lab.

Dr Wright said the lab failed to find any trace of DNA on a car owned by Shandee's ex-boyfriend John Peros, who was charged and since acquitted of Shandee's death. He has denied any involvement in her murder.

Mr Peros' car had been driven many thousands of kilometres by Shandee's ex-partner, however none of the 33 samples retrieved from the car found the driver's own DNA inside the vehicle.

Lawyer Kristy Bell, who represented Shandee and her family at a 2019 inquest into her death said there must be an investigation into the lab.

A Queensland Health spokesperson said: "The role of Forensic and Scientific Services is to provide analysis to the Queensland Police Service and provide professional evidence in court describing that analysis."

Shandee's family seeks inquiry as 'DNA failures' exposed

The Australian, Australia by David Murray And Charlie Peel
 General News - Page 1 - 1172 words - ID 1544761657 - Photo: Yes - Type: News Item -
 Size: 887.00cm²

26 Nov 2021

Murder victim Shandee Blackburn's family is demanding immediate retesting of forensic evidence in the case, and a full inquiry to determine the extent to which other crimes have been affected by a litany of major errors and problems in Queensland's government-run laboratory.

Legal and academic figures have backed the family's call for a thorough investigation into the laboratory, as more serious failures in the handling of Blackburn's unsolved stabbing murder are revealed. Mistakes in the lab identified by forensic scientist Kirsty Wright will undermine confidence in Queensland's legal system and jeopardise prosecutions until investigated, criminal defence lawyers and former police say. As the Health Department refuses to answer questions about its laboratory, Blackburn's mother, Vicki, and sister Shannah said they were shocked after learning of the forensics failures that may have helped her killer get away with murder.

Vicki Blackburn said the many concerns raised in investigative podcast series Shandee's Story, examining her daughter's slaying as she walked home from work in Mackay in 2013, were not isolated and had been going on for a long time. "What I'm asking is for the Queensland government to immediately hand over all samples and records from Shandee's case to an independent, fully qualified facility for retesting to be carried out with the utmost urgency," she said. "You can't sweep this under the carpet. This needs to be sorted out for every case." Vicki and Shannah Blackburn joined Dr Wright, the family's lawyer, Kristy Bell, and The Australian's Hedley Thomas, who has been investigating the murder for the podcast, in a media conference in Brisbane to call on the state government to act.

Dr Wright outlined some of her findings and her conclusion that the government laboratory's results could not be trusted. "Quite simply, I've never seen a case done so poorly," she said.

Ms Bell said the revelations would have an "astronomical" impact on the state's criminal justice system. "Probably the closest comparison I can think of is the 'Lawyer X' scandal that's taken place in Victoria," she said. "We really have no idea what the potential is for the impact on other cases." Ms Bell backed the calls by the family and Dr Wright for an independent inquiry, and said the first step for Blackburn's case was to have forensic samples retested.

There was a "real potential" of people being convicted for offences of which they were innocent, or of the guilty walking free, she said, "so it is in the public interest this be thoroughly investigated." Defence lawyer Nick Dore said the "concerning" doubts engulfing forensics "could potentially undermine a fair trial and be disastrous for both victims and for the accused".

"There is a perception that a Continued on Page 6 SHANDEE'S STORY Three episodes this week EPISODE 8 OUT NOW

Continued from Page 1 lack of forensics weakens a case and large amounts strengthen a case," Mr Dore said.

Former Queensland Law Society president Bill Potts said juries relied on the independent and expert evidence of scientists.

"The questions being asked are serious, and a serious response should be undertaken to ensure the integrity of results and integrity of evidence before the courts," Mr Potts said.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said on Thursday she would receive a briefing from police before commenting.

Her deputy, Steven Miles, said he was unaware of any issues with the laboratory when he was health minister from 2017 to last year. "You've got to give us a chance to see what's been said.

This is the first I've heard of it," Mr Miles said.

In the latest revelation from the podcast, Dr Wright said in the weeks after the murder, the laboratory had "incredibly" found no DNA on a high-priority sample taken from Blackburn's arm that would have contained many hundreds of her own skin cells.

Dr Wright said there should have been "alarm bells ringing" in the lab after the testing did not detect DNA in the forearm sample.

"Without any question, you should get a DNA profile (in that type of sample) 100 per cent of the time," she said.

Sixteen months later, in July 2014, the lab conducted more testing of the same sample and detected mixed DNA from multiple people but could not interpret who they were.

"That's critical because it shows that at the time a majority of the samples from Shandee's case were being analysed, there were flaws in the system.

"This sample proves that," Dr Wright said. "Further, it shows that the laboratory knew that. In 2014, the laboratory knew there were flaws in their processes." At that point, the lab should have gone back and retested 43 other samples from Blackburn's case that they hadn't fully tested, Dr Wright said.

To collect the forearm sample, police used a special kind of sticky tape, firmly pressing on the skin six to 12 times. Each press would have transferred hundreds of cells from Blackburn's skin, Dr Wright said.

"If an offender had come into contact or gripped her arm at the time of the attack, potentially some of the offender's cells may have transferred across to Shandee's skin.

"What other samples that could contain the offender's DNA are they not detecting? What's going wrong within that lab?" It was previously revealed the lab failed to detect trace DNA of suspect John Peros in his own dirty vehicle, and failed to detect DNA in a sample from a pool of blood.

Dr Wright said the Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services lab should be

suspended until it was independently reviewed.

"We can't, in my opinion and based on what I've observed, trust . any of the DNA results coming out of this lab," Dr Wright told the podcast.

"If a lab is making mistakes, they could potentially help to send an innocent person to jail or help to acquit somebody that's guilty.

"At best, I believe the lab has been negligent . at worst, in my opinion, I think they've been obstructive in relation to assisting the police in resolving this case." Dr Wright, a forensic biologist and former head of the nation's criminal DNA database, is confident after reading hundreds of pages of relevant documents that major changes to the lab's equipment and software introduced just weeks before Blackburn's murder interfered with its ability to generate DNA profiles.

Criminologist and former detective Terry Goldsworthy said Dr Wright's concerns should be "immediately looked at", as any doubts about forensics would be a blow to the justice system's legitimacy.

"Deficiencies should be fixed immediately, otherwise they're opening up a Pandora's box," Dr Goldsworthy said.

Shandee Blackburn murder: family seeks inquiry as ‘DNA failures’ exposed

- [David Murray](#)

National Crime Correspondent

[Charlie Peel](#)

Journalist

[@charliepeeled](#)

Murder victim Shandee Blackburn’s family is demanding immediate retesting of forensic evidence in the case, and a full inquiry to determine the extent to which other crimes have been affected by a litany of major errors and problems in Queensland’s government-run laboratory.

Legal and academic figures have backed the family’s call for a thorough investigation into the laboratory, as more serious failures in the handling of Blackburn’s unsolved stabbing murder are revealed. Mistakes in the lab identified by forensic scientist Kirsty Wright will undermine confidence in Queensland’s legal system and jeopardise prosecutions until investigated, criminal defence lawyers and former police say. As the Health Department refuses to answer questions about its laboratory, Blackburn’s mother, Vicki, and sister Shannah said they were shocked after learning of the forensics failures that may have helped her killer get away with murder.

Vicki Blackburn said the many concerns raised in investigative podcast series Shandee’s Story, examining her daughter’s slaying as she walked home from work in Mackay in 2013, were not isolated and had been going on for a long time.

“What I’m asking is for the Queensland government to immediately hand over all samples and records from Shandee’s case to an independent, fully qualified facility for retesting to be carried out with the utmost urgency,” she said. “You can’t sweep this under the carpet. This needs to be sorted out for every case.”

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Dr Wright outlined some of her findings and her conclusion that the government laboratory’s results could not be trusted. “Quite simply, I’ve never seen a case done so poorly,” she said.

Ms Bell said the revelations would have an “astronomical” impact on the state’s criminal justice system. “Probably the closest comparison I can think of is the ‘Lawyer X’ scandal

that's taken place in Victoria," she said. "We really have no idea what the potential is for the impact on other cases."

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There was a "real potential" of people being convicted for offences of which they were innocent, or of the guilty walking free, she said, "so it is in the public interest this be thoroughly investigated."

Dr Kirsty Wright has been a valued and trusted scientist for the Queensland Government and a consultant for numerous state and federal agencies.

Her work in forensics after the 2002 Bali Bombings, and then in 2005 as DNA Team Leader for the International Disaster Victim Identification effort in Thailand after the Boxing Day tsunami, is acknowledged as gold-standard.

Dr Wright was awarded a prestigious Churchill Fellowship to investigate methods of identifying missing people in the US and UK.

She led the expansion of the National Criminal Investigation DNA Database for federal agency CrimTrac in 2007, and the Queensland Skeletal Remains Project, dedicated to identifying long-term missing persons.

She spent several years in the Queensland Health forensic biology laboratory, starting out as a technician doing hands-on laboratory work generating DNA profiles.

Within about a year she was promoted to a reporting scientist who would receive from police bags full of evidence such as t-shirts and weapons and examine them for blood, semen and saliva.

She went on to spend about nine years in academia, teaching forensic science at Griffith University, and was also program director of the Master of Science in Forensic Science, Crime Scene Examination.

There, she facilitated research by Queensland police to improve their crime scene examination processes.

Dr Wright is also an officer in the Royal Australian Air Force and has worked in remote jungles and historical battlefields to identify missing Australian soldiers from WWI and WWII and the Korean War.

She has a high-level Australian Government security clearance and assists in improving forensic capabilities for current conflicts.

She was integral in working out the best scientific method to identify the degraded and fragile skeletal remains of abducted 13-year-old Queensland boy Daniel Morcombe.

Defence lawyer Nick Dore said the "concerning" doubts engulfing forensics "could potentially undermine a fair trial and be disastrous for both victims and for the accused".

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[Elise Williams](#)

[@elisenwilliams](#)

2 min read

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[ABC Tropical North](#)

/ By [Tobi Loftus](#)

Posted 14h ago14 hours ago

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- Ms Blackburn's family has called for an inquiry into the handling of the forensic material

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"A total of 51 samples from John Peros' vehicle was collected and sent to the laboratory," Dr Wright said.

"33 of those samples were tested and incredibly none of the driver's DNA was found in his own vehicle that was observed by the scientific officer as not being clean.

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She said there were also 17 incorrect results that were released from the laboratory as part of the investigation that incorrectly linked people to crime scene samples taken from Shandee's clothing.

"For even one incorrect result to be released from a laboratory is inexcusable, but in this case there were 17," she said.

"There was something very, very wrong happening within that laboratory.

"All of the samples need to be retested by another laboratory and I believe that there has to be a public inquiry.

"I don't believe other cases may have been spared these issues and I think these are potentially systemic errors and what we're seeing with Shandee's case may be the tip of a very large iceberg."

Ms Blackburn's mother Vicki Blackburn echoed Dr Wright's call for an inquiry and said evidence needed to be retested as a matter of "utmost urgency".

"We are in utter shock that this could happen in Australia, not only to the samples in Shandee's case, but to the potentially hundreds of more cases tested by this laboratory," she said.

"This is not something that can be excused away, allowed to be swept under the carpet, silenced or shrugged off.

"This is totally unacceptable. This is shameful."

Investigation needed for 'public interest'

Criminal lawyer Kristy Bell, who represented the Blackburn family in the coronial inquest, said it was vitally important the evidence get re-tested in case it brought new evidence to light.

"An assessment can then be made about whether or not an application could be made by the Department of Public Prosecutions to have a person re-tried," Ms Bell said.

She said Dr Wright's analysis could have an "astronomical impact" on the legal system in Queensland.

"There is real potential for people who are innocent of crimes of which they've been convicted are sitting in prison serving sentences, and alternatively there are those who may have been acquitted or not even charged with offences for which they are responsible," she said.

"It is in the public interest that this be thoroughly investigated."

A Queensland Health spokesperson said they could not comment on individual cases.

"The role of Forensic and Scientific Services is to provide analysis to the Queensland Police Service and provide professional evidence in court describing that analysis," the spokesperson said.

Justin Howes

From: Justin Howes
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 12:16 PM
To: Adrian Pippia; Allison Lloyd; Cathie Allen; Kirsten Scott; Kylie Rika; Luke Ryan; Paula Brisotto; Sharon Johnstone; Wendy Harmer
Subject: Questions from podcast author

Hi

As Lara mentioned, I can make available the questions that we received from Hedley Thomas (author of podcast).

s.73, Sch 3(7)

I will leave it up to you to share with your team if you see relevant.

Thanks
Justin

Q1: Can QHFSS DNA experts explain why a majority of samples from the vehicle of John PEROS were not analysed past the quantitation step (labelled in part V1 to V51)?

Q2: What criteria is used by the QHFSS DNA laboratory to assess whether analysis of samples from a major crime should be either stopped after quantitation or fully tested?

Q3: Under what circumstances is it possible for a crime scene sample to have no DNA detected at the quantitation stage, to then be fully tested resulting in the generation of a reportable DNA profile?

Q4: Did this occur and, if yes, how many times did it occur in the case of Shandee Blackburn?

Q5: If yes in one or more instances, why weren't all vehicle samples - and all crime scene samples - which were initially reported as 'no DNA detected' further analysed?

Q6: Would a Combur positive swab taken from a pool of blood at a crime scene by a Scientific Officer only hours after a homicide be expected to produce a DNA profile?

Q7: Can QHFSS DNA experts explain why no DNA was detected from the sample a QPS Scientific Officer stated had come from a pool of blood, and which he labelled as 'S14: Swab of blood from gutter on Boddington Street' (barcode 572572940)?

Q8: What do you say to the suggestion that issues arising from the introduction of PowerPlex 21 and STRmix in December 2012 had a detrimental impact on the laboratory's profiling of samples for DNA in this case in the weeks and months afterwards?

Q9: Did any of the scientists in the QHFSS DNA laboratory express concerns to management over unusual or poor results being obtained in the case of Shandee Blackburn by PowerPlex 21 after it was implemented?

Q10: Was the QHFSS DNA laboratory experiencing any difficulties interpreting mixtures from crime scene samples during the period samples from QPS1300165446 were being analysed?

Q11: Can QHFSS DNA experts explain why the following DNA mixtures from QPS1300165446 were reported as 'Incorrect result' to the QPS? 572573268 (on 24/09/2014); 572984091 (on 03/04.2013); 572984407 (on 03/04/2013); and 572984416 (on 28/03/2013).

Q12: Is it unusual for the QHFSS DNA laboratory to report incorrect results to the QPS? If yes, please explain why so many incorrect results were reported to the QPS for QPS1300165446? If no, please provide how many samples were reported as 'Incorrect result' in 2013 and 2014.

Q13: Were the QPS or any members of the Queensland criminal justice system made aware that there may be DNA profiling issues affecting the reliability of results previously reported as 'no DNA detected' for QPS1300165446? If yes, please provide a copy of the communication/s, including the date of the advice and who it was directed too? If no, please explain why this did not occur.

Q14: Did the QHFSS DNA laboratory provide any other advice (apart from suggesting the possible 'presence of bacteria') to the QPS explaining why DNA profiles weren't being obtained when they were expected to for QPS1300165446? If yes, please provide that advice, including the date of the advice and to whom it was directed.

Q15: Can a QHFSS DNA expert explain how samples relating to QPS1300165446 that were correctly packaged, correctly stored, and well-preserved fail to produce a profile due to the purported presence of bacteria?



Justin Howes

A/Managing Scientist

Police Services Stream, Forensic & Scientific Services
Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p 07 s.73 m s.73

a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108

e s.73 @health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/healthsupport/businesses/forensic-and-scientific-services

From: [Lara Keller](#)
Subject: Media Engagement Reminder
Date: Friday, 26 November 2021 1:27:41 PM

Dear All

From time to time, the work done by our esteemed FSS colleagues becomes the subject of media attention.

It's a timely reminder that as QH employees we should not offer comment, interview or enter into correspondence or discussion with media representatives about our work.

This is described in the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct:

https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/182292/code-of-conduct.pdf

QH Standard QH-IMP-423-1:2015 Media Relations can be found here:

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0037/397378/qh-imp-423-1.pdf

So if you are approached by a member of the media for comment about any government matter, you should respectfully decline and refer the matter to your line manager.

On another note:



Thank you for the excellent work you do for Queenslanders.

Kind Regards

Lara

Lara Keller B App Sc (MLS), Grad Cert Health Mgt, MAIMS, CMgr FIML
A/Executive Director

Forensic and Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p (07) s.73 m^{s.73}

a Administration, Level 1, 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD, 4108

e s.73 @health.qld.gov.au **w** www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

Justin Howes

From: Matthew Hunt
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 3:18 PM
To: Justin Howes; Sharon Johnstone; Kylie Rika; Rhys Parry; Adrian Pippia
Subject: Latest video from podcast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9RRoeXuBg>

From: Justin Howes <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 3:00 PM
To: Matthew Hunt <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Sharon Johnstone <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Kylie Rika <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Rhys Parry <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Media Update

Thanks Matthew

I had just heard that the DG was very happy with the Brief we prepared, so no doubt this filter through to the Minister. I would suspect in addition to info through to the Commissioner of Police that probably helped here too.

Justin

Justin Howes

A/Managing Scientist

Police Services Stream, Forensic & Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p 07 s.73 m s.73
a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108
e s.73@health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/healthsupport/businesses/forensic-and-scientific-services

From: Matthew Hunt <s.73t@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 2:31 PM
To: Justin Howes <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Sharon Johnstone <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Kylie Rika <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Rhys Parry <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Media Update

From: FSS IRS <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 2:28 PM
To: Matthew Hunt <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Alerts - Forensic DNA for 11/26/2021

Matthew,

Please find attached.

Regards,

Sonia

Sonia Johnson

Senior Library Technician

Forensic & Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p (07) s.73

a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD, 4108

e sonia.johnson@health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

Queensland Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

From: Matthew Hunt <Matthew.Hunt@health.qld.gov.au>

Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 2:09 PM

To: FSS IRS <FSS_IRS@health.qld.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Alerts - Forensic DNA for 11/26/2021

Hi,

Could I please have access to this related article:

https://www.theaustralian.com.au/subscribe/news/1/?sourceCode=TAWEB_WRE170_a_GGL&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theaustralian.com.au%2Fnation%2Fshandee-blackburn-murder-mother-sister-call-for-retesting-of-crucial-evidence%2Fnews-story%2F5d14cc03489a420130b8af637eef9e74&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium

Thanks,

Matthew Hunt

Scientist – Forensic Reporting and Intelligence Team

Forensic DNA Analysis, Police Services Stream

Forensic & Scientific Services, Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p (07) s.73

a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, Qld, 4108

e s.73@health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

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From: FSS Information Research Services <fss_irs@health.qld.gov.au>

Sent: Friday, 26 November 2021 11:06 AM

To: Matthew Hunt <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Alerts - Forensic DNA for 11/26/2021

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News alerts - Forensic DNA

Shandee Blackburn murder case [compilation]

Various

The family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn are calling for an independent review after learning of “critical errors” made by a pathology lab that could have foiled the hunt for her killer.

‘Critical errors’: Lab fail exposed in Shandee Blackburn murder case

Forensic biologist labels Shandee Blackburn’s murder investigation a ‘forensic train wreck’

Shandee Blackburn murder: family seeks inquiry as ‘DNA failures’ exposed

Lab tests under fire

Contact us for a copy of the full text articles (QH staff only)

This email does not represent the full media coverage of this topic. Contact us at fss_irs@health.qld.gov.au if you require further information on a news story.

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RTI Release

Justin Howes

From: Justin Howes
Sent: Monday, 29 November 2021 10:23 AM
To: Kathryn Keighran; Josleen Daher
Subject: RE: Code of Conduct QH
Attachments: murder lab 'train wreck'.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hi
 I should have snipped the part I refer to. The full article is attached.

Justin

... manuals for the new version.
 Wright says there were extremely talented scientists in the lab in 2013, and believes they must have seen the obvious errors.
 "Did they alert lab management to these serious issues and their concerns were ignored? If scientists from the QHFSS DNA laboratory know the answer to this question they can come forward – they can contact me or Hedley in confidence."
 The scientific community should be deeply concerned until the matter is investigated, she says.
 Anyone with information about the murder of Shandee Blackburn can contact Hedley Thomas confidentially at shandee@theaustralian.com.au

they're the experts
 ne differently, that
 t, that's the results
 nd of it," he says.
 would argue the
 he's no scientist,
 rtise in the area.
 e of Peros's trace
 s from his own car
 le", he says.
 nk, what else could
 be? We certainly
 have explanations
 amined."
 Health failed to
 ceiving 15 detailed
 it the problems in
 nd Scientific Servi
 ng contacted again
 1stralian for confir
 lays to reply, the
 I not provide any

Justin Howes

A/Managing Scientist

Police Services Stream, Forensic & Scientific Services
 Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p 07 [s.73](#) [ms.73](#)
 a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108
 e [s.73](#) [@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Justin.Howes@health.qld.gov.au) w www.health.qld.gov.au/healthsupport/businesses/forensic-and-scientific-services

From: Justin Howes
Sent: Monday, 29 November 2021 9:56 AM
To: Kathryn Keighran s.73 [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Josleen Daher s.73 [REDACTED]r@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Code of Conduct QH

Hi there

I am curious about the CoC back in 2007. If a staff member left QH, are they still obliged to behave in line with the code of conduct? I am not sure how this could be controlled, but we have a former staff member who left in 2007 who is speaking quite terribly about the lab to the media, and has called for staff (written in The Australian on 27 Nov) to contact her confidentially if they have something to say.

Thanks
Justin

Justin Howes
A/Managing Scientist

Police Services Stream, Forensic & Scientific Services
Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p 07 s.73 [REDACTED] m s.73 [REDACTED]
a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108
e s.73 [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/healthsupport/businesses/forensic-and-scientific-services

RTI Release

01/12/2021

- Whole Team Presentation - by RHP or JAH
- Questions & responses

s.73, Sch 3(7)

s.47(3)(b)



Date:

Page:



s.47(3)(b)

[Redacted]

s.47(3)(b)

[Redacted]

- Create Teams for Media - PMB.

- for Chem - Tony Peter - Shandee Case.

- Podcasts - a few more weeks of articles.

- Letter to Shandee's family from the Minister.

s.47(3)(b)

[Redacted]

RTI 2959

Kirsten Scott

From: Kirsten Scott
Sent: Wednesday, 1 December 2021 6:16 AM

Sch 3(10)(1)



Kirsten



Kirsten Scott

Senior Scientist Quality and Projects

Forensic DNA Analysis, Police Services Stream
Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p 07 [REDACTED]
a 39 Kessels Road, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108
e [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

Queensland Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

RTI Release

From: [Lara Keller](#)
To: [Lara Keller](#)
Subject: 'Hypocritical': Shandee Blackburn's mum hits out over lab blame
Date: Thursday, 2 December 2021 8:30:45 AM

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<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/mackay/vicki-blackburn-angry-at-premiers-comments-regarding-pathology-lab-failures/news-story/5c01028507ec8b3bb4e8069aa0927f51>



Sent from my iPhone

RTI Release

From: [Brett Bricknell](#)
To: [Yvonne Li](#); [Lara Keller](#); [Alison Slade](#)
Cc: [DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision](#)
Subject: Re: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn
Date: Thursday, 2 December 2021 9:52:43 AM

Great idea!

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Yvonne Li <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, December 2, 2021 9:46:27 AM
To: Brett Bricknell <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Lara Keller <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Alison Slade <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Cc: DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

Good morning

Apologies to Brett for not running this idea past you first – I spoke to Lara yesterday and was throwing around some ideas how to make the Forensic DNA Team feel supported while this media is swirling around.

Lara mentioned that the team was meeting on Friday for an hour and I suggested it maybe nice for them to hear from Keith for a few minutes to support them through this challenging time.

Brett, will that be ok with you? I'm pretty sure Keith is open to doing chatting to them on a speaker phone (as I understand video on TEAMS maybe difficult in that location)

I look forward to your reply
Yvonne

From: DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 9:04 AM
To: Yvonne Li <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

Hi there Yvonne

Thank you for sending this through. Keith will step out of the workshop he's attending on Friday to call the FSS troupes, however is Keith to call them, or will the team call Keith's mobile and pop him on speaker phone?

Thanks very much,
Bel

From: Yvonne Li <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 1 December 2021 4:23 PM

To: DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision ^{s.73} [REDACTED] [@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au)>
Subject: FW: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

From: Alison Slade <^{s.73} [REDACTED] [@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au)>

Sent: Wednesday, 1 December 2021 3:37 PM

To: Yvonne Li ^{s.73} [REDACTED] [@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au)>

Subject: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

Hi Yvonne – Brief that was sent to DG. Cheers, Alison

-----< Content Manager Record Information >-----

Record Number: ^{s.73} [REDACTED]

Title: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

RTI Release

From: [Brett Bricknell](#)
To: [Yvonne Li](#); [Lara Keller](#); [Alison Slade](#)
Cc: [DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision](#)
Subject: Re: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn
Date: Thursday, 2 December 2021 9:52:43 AM

Great idea!

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Yvonne Li <[s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, December 2, 2021 9:46:27 AM
To: Brett Bricknell [s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>; Lara Keller [s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>; Alison Slade [s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>
Cc: DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision [s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

Good morning

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Yvonne

From: DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision [s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 9:04 AM
To: Yvonne Li [s.73](#)i@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

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Thanks very much,
Bel

From: Yvonne Li [s.73](#)@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 1 December 2021 4:23 PM

To: DDGandCMO_PreventionDivision ^{s.73} [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au)>
Subject: FW: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

From: Alison Slade <^{s.73} [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au)>
Sent: Wednesday, 1 December 2021 3:37 PM
To: Yvonne Li <^{s.73} [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au)>
Subject: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

Hi Yvonne – Brief that was sent to DG. Cheers, Alison

-----< Content Manager Record Information >-----

Record Number: ^{s.73} [REDACTED]
Title: DG BN - DNA Analysis of samples re death of Shandee Blackburn

RTI Release

Documents > General

📄	Name ↕	Modified ↕	Modified By ↕
📄	2021T202 Courier Mail.pdf	December 2, 2021	Lara Keller
📄	Australian_25Nov2021_p_1_7.pdf	December 2, 2021	Paula Brisotto
📄	murder forensics refusal a disgrace.pdf	December 2, 2021	Paula Brisotto
📄	murder lab 'train wreck'.pdf	December 2, 2021	Paula Brisotto
📄	Restest Shandee forensic evidence.pdf	December 2, 2021	Paula Brisotto
📄	Shandee Blackburn murder_Queensland He...	December 2, 2021	Paula Brisotto
📄	victim killed by someone she knew.pdf	December 2, 2021	Paula Brisotto

From: [Lara Keller](#)
To: [Cathie Allen](#); [Justin Howes](#); [Paula Brisotto](#)
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened
Date: Thursday, 2 December 2021 11:14:00 AM

s.73, Sch 3(7)

From: Lara Keller <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:59 AM
To: Brett Bricknell <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

From: FSS Corro <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:57 AM
To: Lara Keller <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

From: FSS IRS <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:57 AM
To: FSS Corro <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

From: FSS IRS
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:54 AM
To: Lara Keller <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>; Cathie Allen <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>; Justin Howes <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>; Alex Olumbe <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>; Deborah Whelan <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Cc: Alison Slade <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>; Trish Murphy <[s.73 @health.qld.gov.au](#)>
Subject: RE: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

Inquest into Shandee Blackburn's murder to be

reopened



coronial inquest into the murder of Mackay woman Shandee Blackburn is set to be reopened. Picture: Supplied

- [Lydia Lynch](#)

Reporter

- 19 minutes ago December 2, 2021

A coronial inquest into the murder of Mackay woman [Shandee Blackburn](#) is set to be reopened after allegations of serious forensic failures in her case were exposed.

The case is the subject of The Australian's podcast series, [Shandee's Story](#).

The Palaszczuk government has faced mounting pressure to launch an inquiry into the state-run forensic laboratory after one of Australia's most respected DNA scientists, Kirsty Wright, [uncovered a litany of errors](#) in the handling of forensic evidence in the Blackburn case.

Health Minister Yvette D'Ath wrote to Shannon Fentiman, the state's Attorney-General, on Thursday morning asking for the case to be reopened.

"In relation to the Shandee Blackburn case, based on the claims made regarding forensic evidence and whether such evidence could lead to new findings," Ms D'Ath told parliament.

"I believe there is sufficient public interest and questions to be addressed to warrant me writing to the Attorney-General to consider requesting the coroner to reopen the matter."

More to come

From: FSS IRS

Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:46 AM

To: Lara Keller <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Cathie Allen <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Justin Howes <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Alex Olumbe <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Deborah Whelan <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Alison Slade <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>; Trish Murphy <[REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

For your information.

This has just come through – I will forward more information as it comes to hand

Regards,

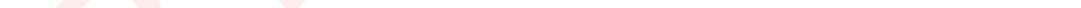
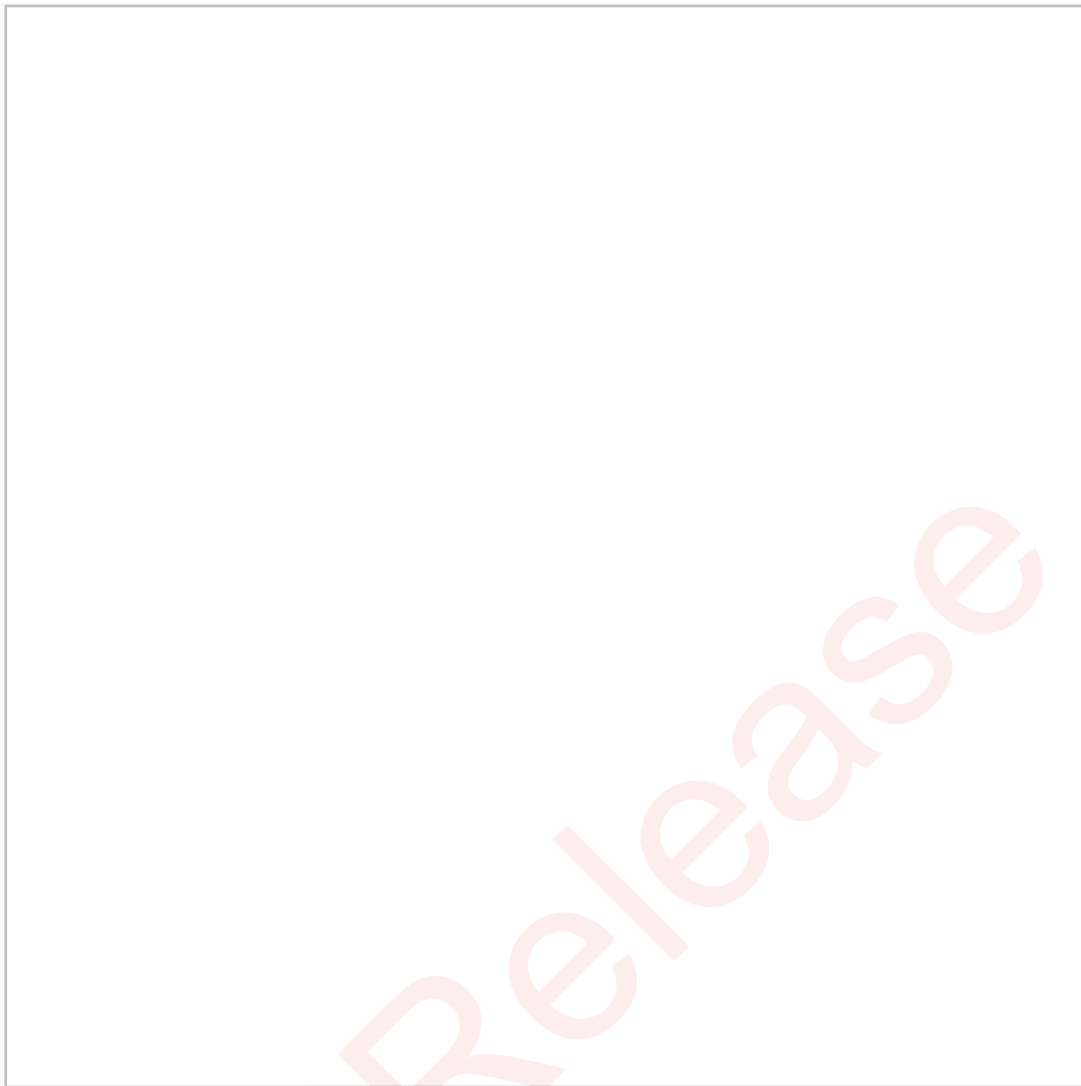
Carol

From: The Australian <aust_newsbreaking@theaustralian.com.au>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:43 AM
To: FSS IRS <FSS_IRS@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

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[BREAKING](#)

[Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened](#)

[Palaszczuk government caves into mounting pressure for new inquiry after The Australian's Shandee's Story podcast exposes litany of errors in the handling of forensic evidence.](#)

[LYDIA LYNCH](#)

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[The Australian](#)



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Sent by The Australian, GPO Box 4245, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Australia.

From: Lara Keller <Lara.Keller@health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:59 AM
To: Brett Bricknell <Brett.Bricknell@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

From: FSS Corro <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:57 AM
To: Lara Keller <s.73 r@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

From: FSS IRS <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:57 AM
To: FSS Corro <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

From: FSS IRS
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:54 AM
To: Lara Keller <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>; Cathie Allen <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>; Justin Howes <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>; Alex Olumbe <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>; Deborah Whelan <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Alison Slade <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>; Trish Murphy <s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

Inquest into Shandee Blackburn's murder to be reopened



coronial inquest into the murder of Mackay woman Shandee Blackburn is set to be reopened. Picture: Supplied

- [Lydia Lynch](#)

Reporter

- 19 minutes ago December 2, 2021

A coronial inquest into the murder of Mackay woman [Shandee Blackburn](#) is set to be reopened after allegations of serious forensic failures in her case were exposed.

The case is the subject of The Australian's podcast series, [Shandee's Story](#).

The Palaszczuk government has faced mounting pressure to launch an inquiry into the state-run forensic laboratory after one of Australia's most respected DNA scientists, Kirsty Wright, [uncovered a litany of errors](#) in the handling of forensic evidence in the Blackburn case.

Health Minister Yvette D'Ath wrote to Shannon Fentiman, the state's Attorney-General, on Thursday morning asking for the case to be reopened.

"In relation to the Shandee Blackburn case, based on the claims made regarding forensic evidence and whether such evidence could lead to new findings," Ms D'Ath told parliament.

"I believe there is sufficient public interest and questions to be addressed to warrant me writing to the Attorney-General to consider requesting the coroner to reopen the matter."

More to come

From: FSS IRS

Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:46 AM

To: Lara Keller <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Cathie Allen <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Justin Howes <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Alex Olumbe <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Deborah Whelan <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>

Cc: Alison Slade <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>; Trish Murphy <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

For your information.

This has just come through – I will forward more information as it comes to hand

Regards,

Carol

From: The Australian <aust_newsbreaking@theaustralian.com.au>

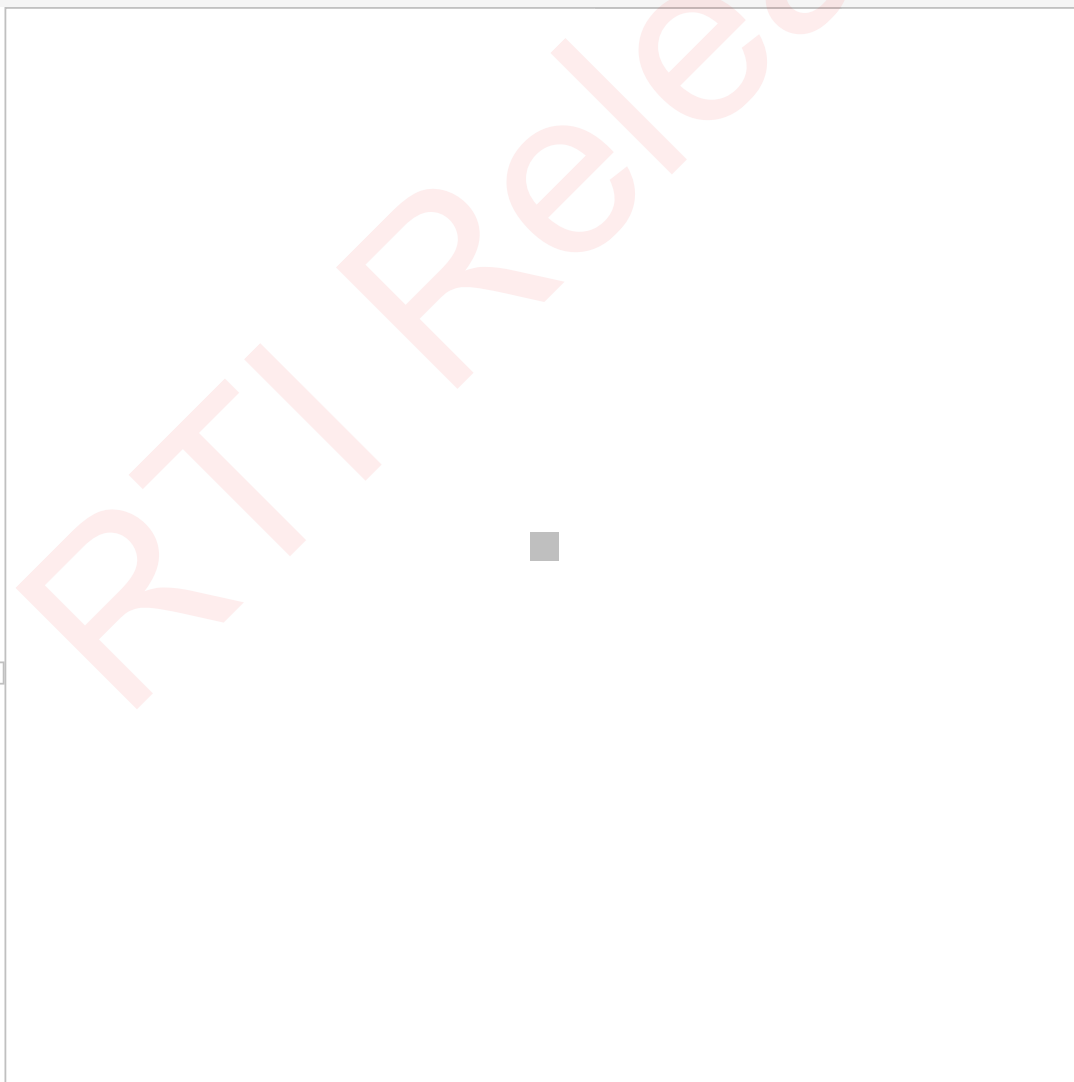
Sent: Thursday, 2 December 2021 10:43 AM

To: FSS IRS <s.73@health.qld.gov.au>

Subject: BREAKING: Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened

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[BREAKING](#)

[Inquest into Shandee's murder to be reopened](#)

[Palaszcuk government caves into mounting pressure for new inquiry after The Australian's Shandee's Story podcast exposes litany of errors in the handling of forensic evidence.](#)

[LYDIA LYNCH](#)

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Sent by The Australian, GPO Box 4245, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Australia.

Justin Howes

Subject: Forensic DNA Analysis presentation
Location: FSS Conference Theatre

Start: Fri 3/12/2021 11:10 AM
End: Fri 3/12/2021 12:10 PM

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Accepted

Organizer: Cathie Allen

Required Attendees: Peter Culshaw; Lara Keller; Justin Howes; Paula Brisotto; Abigail Ryan; Adam Kaity; Adrian Pippia; Alanna Darmanin; Alicia Quartermain; Allan McNevin; Allison Lloyd; Amy Cheng; Angela Adamson; Anne Finch [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Belinda Andersen [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Biljana Micic; Cassandra James; Cecilia Flanagan; Chantal Angus; Claire Gallagher; Deborah Nicoletti [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Generosa Lundie; Helen Williams; Ingrid Moeller; Jacqui Wilson; Janine Seymour-Murray; Josie Entwistle; Julie Brooks; Kerry-Anne Lancaster; Kevin Avdic; Kim Estreich; Kirsten Scott; Kristina Morton; Kylie Rika; Le Lai-Wan [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Lisa Farrelly; Louise Benincasa; Luke Ryan; Madison GULLIVER; Maria Aguilera [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Matthew Hunt; Megan Mathieson; Melissa Cipollone; Michael Goodrich; Michael Hart; Michelle Margetts; Naomi French; Penelope Taylor; Phillip McIndoe; Pierre Acedo; Rhys Parry; Ryu Eba; Sandra McKean; Sharelle Nydam; Sharon Byrne; Sharon Johnstone; Suzanne Sanderson [REDACTED]n@health.qld.gov.au); Tara Prowse [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Tegan Dwyer; Thomas Nurthen; Valerie Caldwell [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Vicki Pendlebury-Jones; Wendy Harmer; Yvonne Connolly

Optional Attendees: Yvonne Li

Hi Everyone

Could you please join us for an update on the current case that's in the media. The meeting will begin at 11.15am, but it would be appreciated if everyone could arrive just prior to that for a prompt start at 11.15am.

Cheers
Cathie