



24 July 2013

Queensland Health responds to documents obtained under RTI

Please attribute the following to Dr Tony O'Connell, Director-General, Queensland Health:

The Queensland Government has advocated for greater openness and transparency from all government departments to improve the community's level of trust in the public service.

Queensland Health has endorsed this concept in the *Blueprint for better healthcare in Queensland* which outlines a plan for greater transparency and public reporting.

Since March 2012, we have published for the first time:

- detailed dental waiting lists
- historical performance data
- specialist outpatient waiting lists

Under the Open Data revolution, we will release data collected on departmental systems and held in the course of performing departmental business on the Open Data website (www.data.qld.gov.au).

While some information will remain accessible only via a Right to Information request (RTI), Queensland Health now publishes documents obtained under RTI on our website for the public to view at www.health.qld.gov.au/foi/pub_scheme.asp#log

The most recent documents uploaded relate to allegations of theft and fraud against Department of Health staff and employees from the 17 Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) in Queensland.

The allegations relate to misuse of drugs, theft of property, falsely obtaining financial benefit, claiming for duties not performed, or theft of cash.

It is important to clarify that an allegation does not mean a criminal offence has occurred.

As Director-General I take very seriously any allegations about the conduct of Department of Health employees and I am confident the Chief Executives of Hospital and Health Services, which are responsible for the management of their employees, also consider the behaviour of their staff very important.

We are a large organisation employing around 65,000 people, and those who have had substantiated allegations relating to misappropriation and theft (which includes claiming for duties not performed) represent less than 0.3% per cent of our workforce - a very small proportion.

The vast majority of our staff do the right thing and perform their duties exceptionally every day.

While employees under investigation, whether internal or criminal, must be afforded natural justice, we work as swiftly as possible to ensure employees not fit for our organisation are removed accordingly.

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However an internal investigation into an allegation may be pending the outcome of a criminal investigation, which can take some time. In other circumstances it can be difficult to investigate, for example due to a lack of evidence or because the alleged offender cannot be identified.

It is important for the community to know that the Department of Health has taken very specific steps to reduce instances of fraud and misconduct in the workplace.

This includes improving employees' understanding of appropriate internal controls and increasing awareness of roles and responsibilities for expenditure control staff. In addition, targeted training and campaigns have been implemented to increase staff awareness of fraud, misconduct and corruption, and the responsibility to report it.

In the last year over 3,500 staff have attended fraud awareness training.

The RTI documents show from 1 January 2011 – 30 June 2012, there were 51 allegations against Department of Health.

At the time of publishing, 12 of these allegations have been substantiated, resolved, or no further action required. The remaining cases are still being investigated, but this does not mean the allegations have been substantiated.

The documents also show from 1 July 2012 – 30 May 2013 there were 19 cases of theft and/or misappropriation made against Department of Health staff.

This is significantly less allegations than the previous period which demonstrates our efforts to reduce instances of fraud and misappropriation are having effect.

Two of these cases which involve falsely or dishonestly obtaining financial benefit (such as for example, through travel allowances or salary), have been resolved and the persons concerned are no longer employed by the Department.

The remaining cases are still under investigation, but again, this does not mean the allegation has been substantiated.

The RTI documents also show from 1 January 2011 – 30 June 2012, 71 allegations were made against staff from Hospital and Health Services across Queensland.

Under health reform that came into effect on July 1 last year, HHSs are required to investigate and respond appropriately to instances such as these, with the assistance of the Department when required.

ENDS

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