

Justin Howes

Subject: Forensic DNA Analysis Team Meeting (today)
Location: Conf Theatre

Start: Fri 26/11/2021 10:30 AM
End: Fri 26/11/2021 11:00 AM

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Accepted

Organizer: FSS.FDNA.Admin

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

Importance: High

Good Morning

Please attend this meeting, in relation to the recent media concerning Forensic DNA Analysis.

See you then

Regards
Wendy

Kylie Rika

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
Show Time As: Tentative

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

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 (Anne_Finch@health.qld.gov.au); Belinda Andersen [REDACTED]@health.qld.gov.au); Biljana Micic; Cassandra James; Cecilia Flanagan; Chantal Angus; Claire Gallagher; Deborah Nicoletti [REDACTED]i@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]@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

Kylie Rika

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Good Morning

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See you then

Regards

Wendy

From: [Trish Murphy](#)
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](#)
Subject: Retest blood says DNA expert - From The Weekend Australia
Date: Monday, 6 December 2021 8:28:01 AM
Attachments: [Retest blood says DNA expert.docx](#)

Full text is attached.

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:) **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.

Retest 'blood' in Shandee Blackburn murder suspect's car, says DNA expert

Twelve areas of John Peros's ute tested presumptively positive to blood including the steering wheel. The government's laboratory later said no DNA was detected, and police accepted it was not blood.

- 6:31PM December 3, 2021

Twelve areas of possible blood in the car of Shandee Blackburn's former boyfriend and accused killer John Peros are a key avenue for new independent forensic scrutiny.

Leading DNA expert Kirsty Wright said all samples from the areas should be retested, with some showing strong indications of the presence of blood in police Luminol testing.

Dr Wright, Shandee's family, police commissioner Katarina Carroll, lawyers and a group representing homicide victims have all welcomed the Palaszczuk government's move this week to reopen the inquest into Shandee's unsolved 2013 stabbing murder in Mackay on Queensland's central coast.

Dr Kirsty Wright talks to the media watched by Shandee's mother Vicki and sister Shannah and Hedley Thomas. Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen

The move was a result of Dr Wright's discovery with The Australian's Hedley Thomas, on the [Shandee's Story](#) podcast, of a litany of major errors and problems in the state's forensics laboratory.

Samples taken from Shandee's body – including from under her fingernails and on her arms and clothing – and knives handed in to police are among items that should be retested, she said.

“This is exactly what we want. There's so much testing that can be done,” Dr Wright said of the inquest reopening. “If the coroner is happy to, just retest everything – just go for it.”

Dr Wright believes there is evidence showing who killed Shandee; the lab just didn't find it.

She is convinced the lab was having serious problems interpreting DNA profiles after introducing new software and DNA profiling kits just weeks before Shandee's murder.

Experienced police scientific officer Adrian Brock collected and labelled as blood 12 samples from Mr Peros's vehicle – including 11 on the driver's side – after spraying it with a fine mist of Luminol. The areas had turned a distinctive blue, testing presumptively positive to blood.

They were on the steering wheel, handbrake well, ignition and clutch, accelerator and brake pedals, rear of the driver's seat, on a rear-door handle, window and door trim, and in the front passenger side footwell.

Experienced police scientific officer Adrian Brock sprayed Luminol all over John Peros's HiLux ute. He reported that he "located potential samples of blood on the steering wheel, ignition area, rear of driver's seat and the front passenger's side foot well".

The government's laboratory later said no DNA was detected, and police accepted it was not blood.

When the government's lab could not find DNA in the samples, police accepted it was not blood. A jury that in 2017 acquitted Mr Peros of murder was never told of it. Mr Peros denies any involvement.

Dr Wright found in a review of hundreds of documents that the lab had stopped testing many crucial samples, including all 12 potential blood samples from the car, at the halfway mark.

The lab has four stages of testing for DNA but in 43 instances stopped after getting no results at the end of the second stage, Dr Wright says.

DNA profiles that are not showing up in stages one and two appear sometimes in the third and fourth stages of testing, she says.

Health Minister Yvette D'Ath said on Thursday she would write to state Attorney-General Shannon Fentiman to request the inquest be reopened.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said on Friday for the first time she would also consider a wide-ranging independent inquiry into the lab.

Shandee's family, as well as legal and scientific experts, are calling for a separate, broader inquiry into the lab's operations.

Ms Palaszczuk said: "I know the Health Minister was writing to the Attorney-General. Let's get the outcome of that first and if there is anything further we need to do, we will closely consider it."

The police commissioner, Ms Carroll, confirmed she had received a heartfelt letter from Shandee's mother, Vicki, asking for all forensic evidence to be retested. "I support anything they are trying to do to resolve this issue," Ms Carroll said. "I know they have asked for an inquest, that matter is still open, just so you know, and we would be heavily supportive of that. Anything I can do to assist that family is incredibly important to me."

She said she still had confidence in the state-run laboratory, citing successful convictions on DNA evidence.

Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group chair Samara McPhedran said reopening the inquest would be a "positive step forward, but of course it's early days". Questions about the laboratory had far-reaching implications that could affect many other victims and it was "crucial that those issues be properly investigated", Dr McPhedran said.

Rhys Parry

From: Kirsten Scott
Sent: Monday, 6 December 2021 11:11 AM
To: Rhys Parry
Subject: s.47(3)(b)

Rhys,

Thanks for giving the whole team an update on Friday.

s.47(3)(b)

Sch 3(10)(1) s.47(3)(b)

Kirsten

[Redacted]

Kirsten Scott

Senior Scientist Quality and Projects

Forensic DNA Analysis, Police Services Stream

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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Reopening inquest welcomed by mum

MACKAY

JANESSA EKERT

THE family of murdered woman Shandee Blackburn say a political push to reopen the coronial inquest into her death is a “step in the right direction” as the Attorney-General prepares to write to the Coroner about re-examining the case.

Recently Health Minister Yvette D’Ath indicated she would write to Attorney-General Shannon Fentiman asking for the case to be reopened.

The next step will be for Ms Fentiman to write to the Coroner to request he looks into the possibility of reopening the inquest.

“Naturally we are quite excited, very very pleased that this first step in the right direction has been taken,” mother Vicki Blackburn said on Thursday after learning of this latest development.

“What comes of this, we don’t know. It’s a long journey, it’s been nearly nine years to date and this is the first step to ... hopefully getting the truth and ... justice for Shandee.”

This move came after Ms Blackburn called Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk a hypocrite after the premier shifted blame over forensic lab failures during her daughter’s murder case.

She is pushing for an inde-

pendent review into the pathology lab that processed the evidence from the 23 year old’s unsolved murder and failed to return adequate DNA findings.

This came to light as part of an investigative podcast by The Australian’s national chief correspondent Hedley

Thomas into Shandee’s February 2013 stabbing death.

Shandee’s mother and her sister Shannah want the Queensland Government to hand over all DNA samples and records to an independent facility and for the Queensland Health-run lab to be investigated.

In parliament last week Ms D’Ath said in relation to the claims over the forensic evidence there was “sufficient public interest and questions to be addressed to warrant me writing to the Attorney-General to consider requesting the coroner reopen the matter.

A spokesman from the minister’s office said this came following discussions with the Premier and the matter was now up to Ms Fentiman to consider.

It is understood she will now write to the Coroner David O’Connell to request he looks into the possibility of reopening the inquest.

“I understand the Health Minister will be writing to me regarding the possibility of the Coroner reopening the in-

quest into the death of Shandee Blackburn,” Ms Fentiman said.

“The next step will be writing to the Coroner to request that they look into the possibility of reopening the inquest.”

Former boyfriend John Peros was charged with her murder in 2014 and acquitted by a supreme court jury in 2017.

In 2020 after an inquest in 2019 Coroner David O’Connell named Mr Peros as her likely killer. He has repeatedly denied any involvement in her death.

As episodes of Hedley Thomas’s podcast are released weekly, Shandee’s family and friends are learning about these developments almost at the same time as the rest of Australia.

Ms Blackburn said the feedback had been extremely positive.

During parliament question time on Wednesday, Opposition Leader David Crisafulli questioned Ms Palaszczuk on when the government would launch an independent investigation into the lab in the face of “overwhelming evidence” of evidence mismanagement.

“This matter occurred in 2013, we weren’t in government at that time,” Ms Palaszczuk said.

“There was a full coronial investigation into this mat-



07 Dec 2021

Courier Mail, Brisbane

Author: Janessa Ekert • Section: Regional Changes - Mackay • Article type : News Item
Classification : Capital City Daily • Audience : 135,007 • Page: 13
Printed Size: 582.00cm² • Region: QLD • Market: Australia • ASR: AUD 12,416
Words: 790 • Item ID: 1550373236

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DOH RTI 2959



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ter.”

Ms Palaszczuk also said the LNP had inflicted cuts on the service.

“It’s something of such fundamental importance, to be fobbed off the way it was is just insulting to every Queenslander,” Ms Blackburn said on Wednesday over the premier’s response.

“The potential for the person who took Shandee’s life to be held accountable and taken off the streets could very well be held in those DNA samples and they are not the slightest bit (concerned).”

Ms Blackburn said the premier was among a number of politicians at a White Ribbon lunch this past Friday who “all stood and vowed to do whatever they could for domestic violence”.

“And then to turn around and go, fobbed off,” she said.

“Does that mean they’ll only work for domestic violence victims ... during their campaign or their term in office.

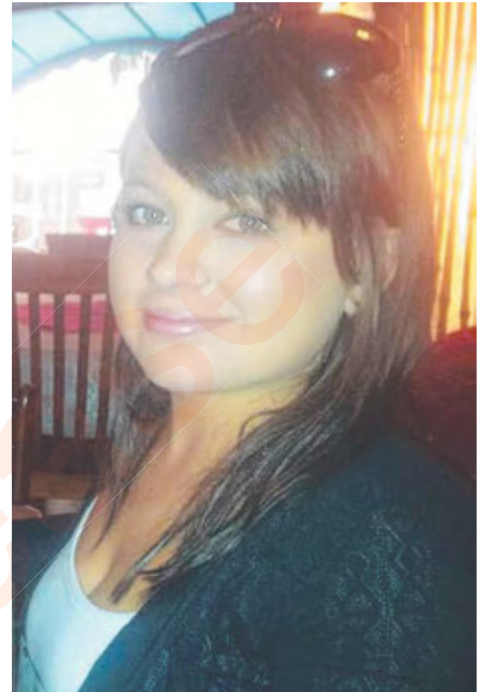
“Shandee’s case was prior but this situation is still ongoing.

“It’s a bit hypocritical to go out and say we’re going to do everything we can ... to prevent domestic violence, but not that.”

A spokesman for the premier’s office said Ms Palaszczuk had sought advice from the director general in relation to the matter.

When asked if this was specifically in relation to an independent review into the pathology lab the spokesman said, “She’s asked for advice in regards to the matters raised recently in media.”

JANESSA.EKERT@NEWS.COM.AU



Vicki Blackburn (left), mother of Shandee Blackburn (right), has hit out at Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk over comments “fobbing off” blame regarding the forensic lab failures.

From: [Carol Church](#)
To: [Trish Murphy](#); [Alison Slade](#); [Amy Jennison](#); [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](#); [Alex Olumbe](#)
Subject: Reopening inquest welcomed by mum - From The Courier Mail
Date: Tuesday, 7 December 2021 9:20:43 AM
Attachments: [reopening inquest.pdf](#)

Full text is attached.

Regards,

Carol



Carol Church

Research and Reference Librarian

Information Research Services (Library), Forensic and Scientific Services

Prevention Division, Queensland Health

p (07) **s.73**

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

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

Work days Monday - Thursday

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



07 Dec 2021

Courier Mail, Brisbane

Author: Janessa Ekert • Section: Regional Changes - Mackay • Article type : News Item
Classification : Capital City Daily • Audience : 135,007 • Page: 13
Printed Size: 582.00cm² • Region: QLD • Market: Australia • ASR: AUD 12,416
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“What comes of this, we don’t know. It’s a long journey, it’s been nearly nine years to date and this is the first step to ... hopefully getting the truth and ... justice for Shandee.”

This move came after Ms Blackburn called Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk a hypocrite after the premier shifted blame over forensic lab failures during her daughter’s murder case.

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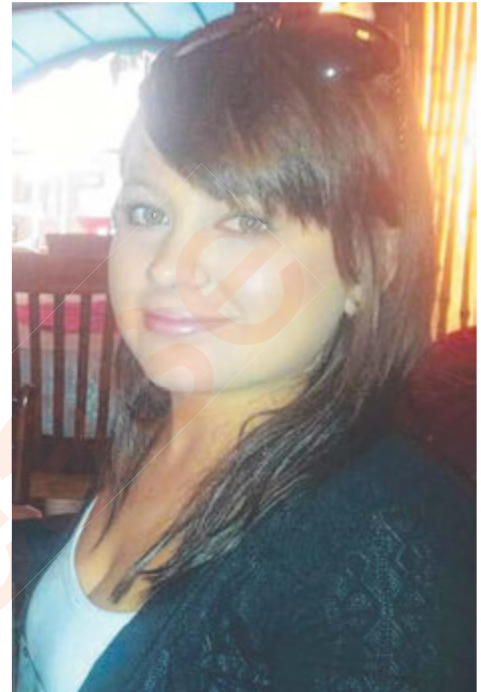
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JANESSA.EKERT@NEWS.COM.AU



Vicki Blackburn (left), mother of Shandee Blackburn (right), has hit out at Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk over comments “fobbing off” blame regarding the forensic lab failures.

Justin Howes

From: Justin Howes
Sent: Friday, 10 December 2021 12:19 PM
To: Paula Brisotto
Subject: FW: Article request
Attachments: Shandee's inquest could reopen.pdf

FYI

Justin Howes

Team Leader - Forensic Reporting and Intelligence Team

Forensic DNA Analysis, 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/fss

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

From: FSS IRS s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 10 December 2021 12:06 PM
To: Justin Howes s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Article request

Justin,

Please find attached.

Regards,

Sonia

From: Justin Howes s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 10 December 2021 12:05 PM
To: FSS IRS s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Article request

Please send me a copy of the article from media monitors SHANDEES INQUEST COULD REOPEN WITH NEW AG PUSH

Thanks

Justin

RTI Release

Cathie Allen

From: Cathie Allen
Sent: Tuesday, 21 December 2021 5:19 PM
To: Neville.DavidH[OSC]
Cc: Lara Keller; Frieberg.DaleJ[OSC]
Subject: RE: Shandee's story - latest article from The Australian - Op Lima ZIMZALA

Hi David

Sch 3(10)(1)

s.47(3)(b)

Cheers
 Cathie

Cathie Allen BSc, MSc (Forensic Science) (She/Her*)
 Managing Scientist

Social Chair, Organising Committee for 25th International Symposium of the
 Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society (ANZFSS), Brisbane, 11 – 15 Sept 2022

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

p 07 s.73 m s.73
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 e s.73 @health.qld.gov.au w www.health.qld.gov.au/fss

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*If you're wondering about the use of pronouns She/Her on this signature block, I encourage you to read some resources available [here](#)

From: Neville.DavidH[OSC] s.73 @police.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 21 December 2021 8:10 AM
To: Cathie Allen s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Lara Keller s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>; Frieberg.DaleJ[OSC] s.73 @police.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Shandee's story - latest article from The Australian - Op Lima ZIMZALA

This email originated from outside Queensland Health. DO NOT click on any links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Cathie

s.47(3)(b)

Sch 3(10)(1)

I hope this helps

David Neville
Inspector
Biometrics
Forensic Services Group
Operations Support Command
Ph: s.73
Mob: s.73
s.73 @police.qld.gov.au

From: Cathie Allen s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 20 December 2021 13:52
To: Neville.DavidH[OSC] s.73 @police.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Frieberg.DaleJ[OSC] s.73 @police.qld.gov.au>; Lara Keller s.73 @health.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Shandee's story - latest article from The Australian

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Queensland Police Service. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi David

Our Library Services have provided the below article regarding the Blackburn case. We've reviewed the information within the article and wish to advise you of the following:

Sch 3(10)(1)

Sch 3(10)(1)

Please let me know if you have any queries regarding this.

Cheers
Cathie

Cathie Allen BSc, MSc (Forensic Science) (She/Her*)
Managing Scientist

Social Chair, Organising Committee for 25th International Symposium of the Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society (ANZFSS), Brisbane, 11 – 15 Sept 2022

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
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Sent: Monday, 20 December 2021 9:10 AM

Shandee's Story podcast: Did lab check DNA of high-priority targets?

- Exclusive [David Murray](#) National Crime Correspondent
- 9:05PM December 19, 2021

Queensland's government-run forensics laboratory may have failed to conduct DNA comparison checks on two high-priority targets in the Shandee Blackburn murder investigation.

Scott MacPherson had a history of using knives to stab and menace people, and was once jailed after violently assaulting Blackburn's mother, Vicki.

Homicide detectives had MacPherson and his friend Isaiah Corowa on a list of six high-priority persons of interest in Blackburn's 2013 murder, along with her former boyfriend John Peros, local criminal William Daniel and his cousin Norman Dorante, and another man.

Forensic scientist Kirsty Wright has been unable to find any trace of DNA from MacPherson or Corowa being compared with any DNA profiles from the crime scene or on Blackburn's body and clothes.

These profiles did not meet the criteria to upload to a national DNA database so they relied on matching using the Queensland lab's processes.

"There's just no evidence the lab ever compared two of the six suspects to their crime scene samples – nothing for Corowa or MacPherson, even though their samples were sent as suspect samples," Dr Wright said.

She found the potential bombshell anomaly while reviewing forensics evidence for investigative podcast series [Shandee's Story](#), and alerted police several weeks before the latest episode.

MacPherson became a person of interest as someone who lived near the murder scene, was a known drug abuser, did not have a reliable alibi and was previously involved in the attack on Vicki, with her daughter Shandee Blackburn present. Claims emerged during the police investigation that he hung out near the Girl Guides hut where the killer hid before the attack, and that Blackburn's missing handbag was seen at his house.

Detectives ruled out MacPherson and Corowa as suspects, as did Coroner David O'Connell in his inquest findings last year.

However, police and the coroner would have had a reasonable expectation that DNA profiles of the two short-listed persons of interest were compared by lab scientists with crime scene DNA.

Barrister Craig Eberhardt, representing Peros, questioned MacPherson at the inquest about his convictions for violence, including the stabbing of a woman in the face and breast.

MacPherson accepted he had a lot of entries on his criminal history for assaulting people, breaking into houses, stealing, assault and carrying a knife, but couldn't remember Vicki Blackburn confronting him after she found him in her yard.

Vicki Blackburn says she found MacPherson armed with a stick in her yard, approaching Shandee and her cousin.

"He went to take a step towards the girls and I stepped in front of him then, and that's when he punched me," she said. "He hit me, punched me, and I fell to the ground."


Vicki Blackburn was later told he pleaded guilty to assault and numerous unrelated charges and was jailed.

An incident involving MacPherson "going berserk" with a knife while drunk made Mackay's Daily Mercury newspaper in 2007. The article described him breaking two knives trying to stab and kick his way through a locked door. He eventually managed to cut and bash his way through with a third knife. His friend Corowa also had an extensive criminal history. Both deny any involvement in Blackburn's murder.

About 85 samples were tested from Shandee Blackburn, her clothing and mobile phone, with 19 DNA profiles generated that contained DNA from unknown persons.

These are the profiles that may not have been compared with the DNA from MacPherson and Corowa.

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 <input type="checkbox"/> Not approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noted <input type="checkbox"/> Further information required (see comments)	Signec  Date 30/12/2021 Dr John Wakefield, Director-General, Queensland Health Comments:
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ACTION REQUIRED BY 26 Nov 2021 as this is a very topical media item

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.
3. Dr Wright was formerly employed at FSS, however left the organisation in 2007.
4. FSS refutes claims made in the article regarding the rigour and quality of testing conducted for this case.
5. 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.
6. **Sch 3(7), s.73**
7. FSS has subsequently prepared high-level responses to these questions (where possible in the given timeframe) for internal purposes only (Attachment 3).

BACKGROUND

8. 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.

9. **Sch 3(10)(1)**

10.

11. Sch 3(10)(1)
12.
13.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

14. QH Legal advice ^{s.47(3)(b), Sch 3(10)(1)}
^{s.73, Sch 3(7)}
15. Sch 3(10)(1)
16. FSS maintains a very close working relationship with QPS, including in the management of sample submission and DNA analysis.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

SENSITIVITIES/RISKS

18. 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 since been approached by additional media outlets in relation to this article, and have to date been providing the same holding statement as previously provided to the journalist
19. s.47(3)(b)

ATTACHMENTS

20. Attachment 1. Article: "Shut lab down: DNA fiasco in murder case", The Australian, 25 November 2021
21. Attachment 2. Questions from Journalist, Hedley Thomas, The Australian
22. Attachment 3. Responses to questions (for internal purposes)

Author Name: Alison Slade Position: Principal Advisor Unit: Forensic and Scientific Services Tel No: s.73 Date Drafted: 25 November 2021	Cleared by (Dir/Snr Dir) Name: Brett Bricknell Position: General Manager Branch: PQ & FSS Tel No: Date Cleared: 26 November 2021 <i>*Note clearance contact is also key contact for brief queries*</i>	Content verified by (DDG/CE) Name: Prof Keith McNeil Position: A/Deputy Director-General & Chief Medical Officer Division: Prevention Tel No: s.73 Date Verified: 26 November 2021
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