

Delivering forensic services

(Report 21: 2018–19).
Tabled 27 June 2019.

Welcome

Welcome to our presentation on the performance audit report on delivering forensic services. Please note that this is a summary. The full report can be read on our website.

Audit objective

In this audit, we assessed whether agencies deliver forensic services efficiently and effectively in order to investigate crime and prosecute offenders.

The agencies included were the:

- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Queensland Health, including the Department of Health and the hospital and health services
- Queensland Police Service.

Context

Forensic services involve analysing different types of physical evidence such as drugs, fingerprints, and blood. It also includes forensic medical examinations.

Delivering most forensic services requires input from staff and experts across multiple agencies; therefore, cross-agency planning and coordination is vital.

Inefficient and ineffective forensic services can increase the risk of negative consequences for individuals and the justice system, including:

- wrongful convictions
- offenders avoiding apprehension or conviction
- delays for victims, suspects and the courts
- unnecessary costs.

Our conclusions: system advances and process improvements

We concluded that the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health are providing forensic services that are mostly effective in supporting the investigation of crime and prosecution of offenders. Both agencies have maintained their accreditation under the National Association of Testing Authorities, which ensures they comply with relevant international and Australian standards.

They have also made some significant system advances and process improvements, such as developing the Forensic Register, and automation and advances in fingerprint services.

Our conclusions: illicit drugs and forensic medical examinations

Nevertheless, aspects of forensic service delivery are inefficient and at times ineffective, most notably the management of illicit drugs and delivery of forensic medical examinations.

The Queensland Police Service does not effectively coordinate how it collects, transports, prioritises and destroys illicit drugs. This contributes to inefficient practices that result in delays and a growing backlog for illicit drug analysis.

Forensic medical examinations is another area where cross-agency collaboration has not been working effectively. Some victims have been refused an examination or endured lengthy delays. This is not consistent with the standard of service the government and community expect.

Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service recently committed to improve forensic medical examination services. The proposed reforms should be finalised as a priority.

What we recommend

We made five recommendations in this report. These covered:

- implementing a governance structure for forensic services across agencies
- implementing a process to coordinate and manage collecting, transporting, prioritising, and destroying illicit drugs
- improving quality assurance processes and practices for annual audits
- developing and delivering reforms to forensic medical examinations.

For more information

For more information on the issues, opportunities and recommendations highlighted in this summary presentation, please see the full report on our website.

Thank you.