

A. Entity responses

As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to the:

- Department of Health
- Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service
- Metro North Hospital and Health Service
- North West Hospital and Health Service
- Children’s Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service.

This appendix contains their detailed responses to our audit recommendations.

The heads of these entities are responsible for the accuracy, fairness, and balance of their comments.

This report has tabled prior to the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly, which aligns with the tabling protocols set out in the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*. These are the standards by which we perform our audits, and the latest version was tabled in Parliament on 16 February 2023. The protocols are in place to ensure that we are consistent with our approach of tabling completed reports prior to caretaker period.

Queensland holds general state elections on the last Saturday of October every 4 years. Constitutionally, the Governor dissolves the Legislative Assembly and issues a writ 26 days before polling day. The caretaker period begins when the Governor dissolves the Legislative Assembly. In 2024, this will occur on 1 October 2024. The time when the caretaker period ends depends on the outcome of the election.

At the end of this appendix, we include our tabling protocols. The full standards are available on our website: www.qao.qld.gov.au/audits/audit-standards



Comments received from Director-General, Queensland Health



Enquiries to:

Telephone:
Our ref:

Queensland Health

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
53 Albert Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: gao@gao.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Vagg

Thank you for your email dated 3 September 2024, regarding the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) proposed report Delivering forensic medical examinations (follow-up audit).

I would like to thank the QAO for their efforts in undertaking this audit and I accept the proposed recommendations outlined in the report. Queensland Health's response to the recommendations provides consolidated feedback based on advice provided by Hospital and Health Services that were consulted during the audit process.

When we met on 27 August 2024, I extended a personal invitation for you, as the incoming Auditor-General, to meet with staff from our Hospital and Health Services and the Department of Health to provide you with further detail and context when supporting suspected victims of sexual assault prior to the report being finalised and released.

I understand that no meetings have been scheduled and given our staff's strong commitment to providing high quality, timely, compassionate care to victim-survivors of sexual assault, I hope you will further consider this invitation.

As we discussed, although significant improvements have already occurred, I acknowledge that there is still work to be done to improve the care of victim-survivors of sexual assault within Queensland's public hospitals. I remain committed to supporting Hospital and Health Services to provide high quality, timely, compassionate care to victim-survivors of sexual assault, wherever they live, and I am confident that the recent investment and system reforms currently underway will assist in achieving this goal.

Due to the upcoming State Election, I respectfully request that the timing of the release of the report be reconsidered. As you are aware, if the report is released during the caretaker period, Queensland Health is restricted by Government conventions to provide a comprehensive and robust response until an incoming Government is confirmed and briefed.

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Queensland 4000 Australia

Website: health.qld.gov.au
Email: [redacted]
ABN 66 329 169 412

Thank you again for the efforts of the QAO team in undertaking the audit and responding to Queensland Health's prior feedback during the process.

Should you require further information, the Department of Health's contact is

Yours sincerely



Michael Walsh
Director-General
24/09/2024



Responses to recommendations



SENSITIVE

Department of Health

Delivering forensic medical examinations (follow-up audit)

Response to recommendations provided by Queensland Health on 17 September 2024

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend Queensland Health:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> implement its performance reporting framework to ensure victims of sexual assault are provided with timely and professional clinical care (Chapter 2) in accordance with the Ministerial Direction – <i>Crisis Care Process</i>. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing and implementing reporting tools that allow each HHS to consistently record the time a victim commences a clinical care pathway, and any reasons for delay regularly assessing whether HHSs are complying with the direction and delivering timely clinical care. 	Agree	Q4 24/25	Queensland Health will progressively implement the sexual assault services reporting framework throughout FY 2024/25. This will include rollout of enhancement to clinical information systems to enable improved oversight of service provision and targeting of improvement efforts. Implementation of the reporting framework will also lead to greater system-wide visibility of HHS performance against the requirements of the Ministerial Direction – <i>Crisis Care Process</i> .

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implem- entatio- n (Quart- er and financi- al year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend Queensland Health:</p> <p>2. ensures suitably trained forensic medical examiners are available across the state to provide timely forensic medical examinations to victims of sexual assault (Chapter 3). This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitoring the overall demand for forensic medical examinations across the state and implementing effective strategies to address any gaps in service ensuring there is appropriate numbers and distribution of qualified forensic medical examiners to meet local needs, including those who specialise in delivering paediatric services to child victims of sexual assault continuing to deliver training to doctors and nurses – including in regional, rural, and remote areas – in how to deliver forensic medical examinations, prepare court reports, and present evidence in court. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Q4 24/25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the sexual assault services reporting framework throughout FY 2024/25 will enable Queensland Health to more easily monitor demand for forensic medical examinations, and address identified gaps. Recurrent funding has been announced to uplift Forensic Medicine Queensland's Forensic Examiner Training Program to provide training for clinicians statewide in caring for people disclosing sexual assault, including dedicated court preparation content and mock court sessions. Children's Health Queensland HHS has also been provided funding to enhance service delivery for paediatric patients, including provision of training for clinicians as appropriate. It should be noted that feedback from remote health services has indicated that there may not always be a trained clinician on site. However, local models of care are being developed, which include timely, compassionate care, ongoing outreach and training, 24/7 phone support, clear care pathways and timely transfer between facilities within the HHS if required.



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implem- entatio- n (Quart- er and financi- al year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend Queensland Health:</p> <p>3. improves its monitoring and reporting of the performance of HHSs in delivering forensic medical examinations to victims of sexual assault (Chapter 3). This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and implementing reporting tools that allow each HHS to consistently record the time a hospital performs a forensic medical examination (as distinct from commencing a clinical care pathway), and the reasons for any delays • regularly assessing whether HHSs deliver timely and effective forensic medical examinations • ensuring forensic medical examiners are given feedback about the quality of the samples they take during an examination. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Q4 24/25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Health will progressively implement the sexual assault services reporting framework throughout FY 2024/25. • Part of this work will include consideration of including additional data points in planned system enhancements to enable greater visibility over when an examination occurs, and at what stage of the patient's journey. • Queensland Health is also working with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Forensic Science Queensland) to establish mechanisms to enable clinicians to access information regarding the quality of samples collected during forensic medical examinations.

Queensland Audit Office *Auditor-General Auditing Standards – Tabling protocols*

Auditor-General Auditing Standards

Appendix C – Tabling protocols

General principle

The Auditor-General aims to table reports to parliament on parliamentary sitting days. Reports may be tabled on a non-sitting day where there are limited or no sitting days within 14 days of finalising a report. The same principle applies during periods of parliamentary recess.

Caretaker period

Queensland holds general state elections on the last Saturday of October every 4 years. Constitutionally, the Governor dissolves the Legislative Assembly and issues a writ 26 days before polling day. The caretaker period begins when the Governor dissolves the Legislative Assembly. The time when the caretaker period ends depends on the outcome of the election.

If a proposed audit report under s. 64 the Auditor-General Act has been issued for comment and responses are received prior to the Legislative Assembly being dissolved, these reports will be tabled during the caretaker period.

If the Legislative Assembly has been dissolved prior to the lapse of the 21-day comment period, these reports will be tabled after the election.

The Auditor-General has ultimate discretion as to when to table reports. An exception to the principles above is that, if the report contains information requested by parliament or of significant public interest, the Auditor-General may elect to table the report as planned.

Reports focusing on local government matters follow the same principles regarding local government elections.

Estimates hearings period

Parliament does not sit during estimates hearings. The Auditor-General will not table an audit report during the estimates hearing period. The estimates hearing period is considered final once the portfolio committee reports are tabled.

An exception to this principle is that, if the report contains information requested by parliament or of a significant public interest, the Auditor-General may elect to table the report.

Significant public interest

Information of significant public interest is a matter of judgement, and the following is a non-exhaustive list of public interest matters which the Auditor-General may consider:

- matters of public concern and importance
- the proper administration of government
- open justice
- public health and safety
- the prevention and detection of crime and fraud
- the economic wellbeing of the state or local government.

