

## C. Status of recommendations

Appendix C captures the status of recommendations from our report *Delivering forensic services* (Report 21: 2018–19) and the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce: *Hear her voice – Report two*.

We assessed the status of the recommendations using the criteria below.

**Figure C1**  
**Assessment criteria**

| Status                | Definition  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Fully implemented     | The recommendation has been implemented or alternative action has been taken that addresses the underlying issues and no further action is required. Any further actions are business as usual.   |
| Partially implemented | Significant progress has been made in implementing the recommendation or taking alternative action, but further work is required before it can be considered business as usual. This also includes where the action taken was less extensive than recommended, as it only addressed some of the underlying issues that led to the recommendation. |
| Not implemented       | No or minimal actions have been taken to implement the recommendation, or the action taken does not address the underlying issues that led to the recommendation.   |
| No longer applicable  | Circumstances have fundamentally changed, making the recommendation no longer applicable. For example, a change in government policy or program has meant the recommendation is no longer relevant.   |

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

### *Delivering forensic services (Report 21: 2018–19)*

In our report *Delivering forensic services* (Report 21: 2018–19) we made 5 recommendations. This included recommending that the Department of Health continues to develop and deliver reforms to forensic medical examinations to improve services to victims (recommendation 4).

We did not follow up the other recommendations from our 2018–19 audit. This is because the government has announced changes to forensic DNA testing in Queensland resulting from the 2022 Commission of Inquiry. It was therefore not an appropriate time for us to follow up on related recommendations. We may assess progress on them in future.



Figure C2 shows our assessment of the status of recommendation 4 from the above report.

### Figure C2 Status of recommendation 4

| <i>Delivering forensic services (Report 21: 2018–19)</i>  |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> We recommend that the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service and all hospital and health services, continues to develop and deliver reforms to forensic medical examinations to improve services to victims, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementing service agreements to deliver forensic medical examinations</li> <li>• developing strategies to recruit and retain appropriately trained physicians and nurses</li> <li>• implementing a range of reporting pathways and supporting processes for all victims</li> <li>• improving clinicians’ awareness of reporting options for victims of sexual assault</li> <li>• improving the availability of, and access to, paediatric services for child victims</li> <li>• establishing interagency services to better integrate clinicians, police, and non-government organisations.</li> </ul> <p><b>QAO assessment: Partially implemented</b></p> |  |
| The department has:   | The department still needs to:   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developed and implemented the health service directive <i>Caring for People Disclosing Sexual Assault</i> in all hospital and health services</li> <li>• implemented service delivery agreements with each of the 16 hospital and health services</li> <li>• introduced alternative reporting pathways for victims, including the new collect and store option</li> <li>• introduced new sexual assault examination kits</li> <li>• updated training materials and delivered training to emergency department doctors and nurses, including on the alternative reporting pathways for victims</li> <li>• established governance committees to improve coordination between entities.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop and implement a strategy to recruit and retain appropriately trained doctors and nurses across the state in how to deliver forensic medical examinations, prepare court reports, and present evidence in court. This should include training the doctors and nurses in regional, rural, and remote areas</li> <li>• improve the availability of, and access to, paediatric services for child victims.</li> </ul> |

Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided by Queensland Health.



## The Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce: *Hear her voice – Report two*

The Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce (the taskforce) made 188 recommendations in *Hear her voice – Report two*.

Recommendation 38 from the Taskforce recommended that the Queensland Audit Office consider undertaking a follow-up audit of our 2018–19 report and review the implementation of the Taskforce recommendations – as relevant to forensic medical examinations. This includes Taskforce recommendations 32 to 37.

Figure C3 shows our assessment of the status of recommendations 32 to 37.

**Figure C3**  
**Status of Taskforce recommendations 32 to 37**

| <i>Hear Her Voice – Report two Volume 1, 2022</i>  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Recommendation 32:</b> The Queensland Government establish and fund a statewide forensic examination service to ensure consistent timely and high-quality forensic medical services to all victims of sexual violence across Queensland. These services should be trauma-informed and culturally competent and comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• permanent positions for qualified forensic clinicians supported by administrative and other necessary supports within each Hospital and Health Service throughout the state to perform forensic medical examinations, as well as professional supervision and support to doctors and nurses performing examinations throughout Queensland</li> <li>• access to timely and high-quality forensic medical examinations 24 hours a day, seven days a week through emergency departments in each hospital by requiring all emergency department doctors in Queensland to be trained to undertake sexual assault forensic medical examinations</li> <li>• forensic nurse examiner positions within each Hospital and Health Service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services to ensure statewide access to high-quality examinations, including in rural, regional and remote communities</li> <li>• contemporary and innovative mechanisms to provide statewide professional supervision and support, including through the use of telehealth services to provide professional supervision and support to practitioners in remote communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>QAO assessment: Partially implemented</b></p> |   |
| Queensland Health has:   | Queensland Health still needs to:   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducted a gap and needs analysis for all hospital and health services</li> <li>• sought and obtained more funding from the Queensland Government to establish statewide forensic medical examination services</li> <li>• established the sexual assault reform team to implement this recommendation</li> <li>• sponsored 10 nurses to enrol in the forensic nurse examiner course provided by Monash University</li> <li>• continued delivering training to emergency department doctors and nurses in how to perform a forensic medical examination</li> <li>• continued to support examiners through Forensic Medicine Queensland’s 24/7 phone support service.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement statewide forensic medical examination services that ensure there are suitably trained examiners available to provide timely examinations to victims across Queensland                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– determine the number of active and dedicated forensic medical examiners there are across the state and the number it needs to deliver an effective service</li> <li>– ensure there are appropriate numbers of qualified forensic medical examiners who specialise in delivering paediatric services to child victims of sexual assault.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |



**Recommendation 33:** Queensland Health, in partnership with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, develop and implement ongoing competency-based training and professional development for doctors and nurses who may be required to prepare reports and give evidence in criminal proceedings for sexual offences. Training materials will be regularly reviewed to remain up to date and align with changes to the law. This training and professional development will include appearing as an expert witness in criminal trials, for example, by the use of mock trials.

**QAO assessment: Partially implemented**

**Queensland Health has:**

- updated training materials to include content on preparing for court. The 8-hour face-to-face workshop now includes a 90-minute segment on preparing for court
- delivered 9 workshops across the state
- delivered training on appearing as an expert witness in a criminal trial and run mock court trials for forensic medical examiners in June 2024.

**Queensland Health still needs to:**

- deliver additional mock trial court training to doctors and nurses across Queensland.

**Recommendation 34:** Queensland Health develop and implement a communication and education campaign to inform doctors who may be required to perform forensic medical examinations about the critical importance of this work, their role, and the support available to them to perform this role well. The campaign will aim to dispel myths about sexual violence and sexual consent and emphasise the value of timely forensic medical examinations for women and girls who are the victims of sexual violence.

**QAO assessment: Fully implemented**

**Queensland Health has:**

- updated training materials to emphasise the importance of the role of a forensic medical examiner and also the importance of timely examinations. The training also addresses several myths about sexual violence
- delivered 9 workshops across the state using the revised training materials.

**Queensland Health still needs to:**

- Queensland Health has fully implemented this recommendation.

**Recommendation 35:** Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service review and revise the model for ‘just in case’ forensic medical examinations in Queensland and implement a new approach that ensures a full medical examination is undertaken with the same number and quality of samples taken in all forensic medical examinations. A revised model for Queensland should require samples to be stored for 12 months, extended for a further 12 months at the option of the victim-survivor. It will be the role of the Queensland Health statewide clinical forensic service to contact victim-survivors near the end of the first 12 months to seek their view about the retention of samples for a further 12 months. The revised model will include clear protocols for the appropriate storage of samples to maintain integrity and ensure continuity of evidence.

**QAO assessment: Fully implemented**

**Queensland Health has:**

- implemented a new collect and store approach that gives victims up to 24 months to decide if they wish to pursue a police investigation. The new approach requires the same number of samples to be taken and stored appropriately.

**Queensland Health still needs to:**

- Queensland Health has fully implemented this recommendation.



**Recommendation 36:** Queensland Health review and update the Sexual Assault Investigation Kits used in Queensland to ensure they are at least of consistent quality as those used in New South Wales and Victoria. As a minimum requirement, kits must be DNA free, and contain DNA decontamination kits and an adequate number of swabs and testing apparatus.

**QAO assessment: Fully implemented**

**Queensland Health has:**

- updated its forensic medical examination kits to be consistent in quality with those used in New South Wales and Victoria
- updated its forensic medical examination kits to ensure they contain DNA decontamination materials, and an adequate number of swabs and testing apparatus
- trained forensic medical examiners in how to use the new kits.

**Queensland Health still needs to:**

- Queensland Health has fully implemented this recommendation.

**Recommendation 37:** Queensland Health immediately stop the practice of charging victims of sexual assault who are ineligible for Medicare for any component of the costs of a forensic medical examination and the medical treatment of any injuries incurred as a result of a sexual assault. This will include consultation with the Federal Government if necessary.

**QAO assessment: Fully implemented**

**Queensland Health has:**

- issued memos to all HHSs to immediately stop charging victims of sexual assault who are ineligible for Medicare.

**Queensland Health still needs to:**

- Queensland Health has fully implemented this recommendation.

*Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided by the Department of Health.*

