

Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland

Ph 07 3003 9722 | enquiries@dnainquiry.qld.gov.au | PO Box 12028, George St Qld 4003 | www.dnainquiry.qld.gov.au

A message to victim-survivors

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference include a requirement that I investigate whether there have been errors or failings in the collection, testing and analysis of forensic DNA evidence in Queensland.

The perception that there may have been such errors may be very concerning for many in the community, particularly for victims of crime and their families and friends.

If I reach the view that there have been errors in DNA collection, testing or analysis, and that these errors may have affected the outcomes of any criminal matters, I will need to consider what steps to take. This may require consultation with anyone who may have been affected by such errors, victim support agencies, and government agencies that can play a role in identifying and rectifying any such errors.

It is too soon for me to determine whether errors have been made. However, I am mindful that just the possibility of errors will be upsetting for some members of our community.

I invite victims who think errors may have been made to provide me with specific examples and context about how the systems and processes for forensic DNA testing and analysis have affected them.

I have to say candidly that a different outcome for an individual case is not a likely result of my Inquiry. However, if I find specific systemic errors then I might need to recommend that a certain category or class of matters should be reviewed, re-tested or reconsidered, and this may indirectly affect individual matters.

If you are concerned about a matter that is currently before the Courts or is currently under criminal investigation, that process will continue notwithstanding my Inquiry. If you make a submission and if I consider your submission raises issues that require urgent attention, I may need to refer the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Queensland Police Service for consideration.

I also want to clarify that matters which have concluded before the Courts are considered finalised and decisions about any further action lie with other agencies (such as the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Queensland Police Service). However, my role in such matters could extend to recommending that a review of the matter be undertaken by a government agency.

How can you make a submission

If you want to contact the Commission about your matter, please see the form on the Commission website at www.dnainquiry.qld.gov.au to make a submission as a victim-survivor. This will allow you to give me the relevant information in brief form by answering specific questions relevant to the DNA analysis and may minimise any further trauma. It will also allow me to obtain information about the DNA analysis in your case from relevant agencies, if appropriate. I can then come back to you if I need further information.

In completing this form, you can tell me how you would like the Commission to use the information you have provided: including whether you would like the information kept confidential and not published in any form, or whether you are happy for the information to be used in an appropriate form (with identifying details changed).

How you can keep in touch with the Commission's activities

Even if you do not want to make a submission or provide information to the Commission, you can still regularly visit the Commission website to obtain up to date information about the progress of the Commission. I will make sure to publish information to keep victim-survivors updated on the progress of the Inquiry, and give you my commitment that the voices of victim-survivors will be heard throughout the Inquiry process.

Yours faithfully

Walter Sofronoff QC

Commissioner

Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA Testing in Queensland