

Question on Notice

No. 364

Asked on 25 March 2021

MR T NICHOLLS ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND MINISTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (HON S FENTIMAN) –

QUESTION:

With reference to concerns expressed by the State Coroner in the Annual Report 2019-20 that a significant number of staff in the Office are employed on a temporary basis 'making it difficult to retain those staff and implement longer term strategies to improve service delivery and support staff wellbeing' —

Will the Attorney-General advise what steps are being taken to meet the Coroner's request to make this funding on a recurrent basis?

ANSWER:

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank the hard-working and dedicated staff within the Coroners office for the very important work they perform each day.

As outlined in the 2019–20 Coroners Court of Queensland (CCQ) Annual Report, this Government has supported and invested in coronial services.

In June 2019, as part of the 2019–20 budget, the Palaszczuk Government provided additional funding for coronial services of \$3.9 million over four years, including an increase of \$474,000 per annum (ongoing) as well as eleven temporary full-time equivalent positions for the Department of Justice and Attorney General, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health.

This temporary funding has enabled the establishment of a second coronial registrar within the Coroners Court, to respond quickly to apparent natural causes deaths and, where appropriate, divert them from the coronial system. It has also strengthened case management support provided to coroners and improved responsiveness to families.

As outlined to the member in my response to question on notice number 237, tabled on 12 April 2021, the Coronial Services Governance Board has been directing implementation of the recommendations from the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) 2018 *Delivering Coronial Services* Report. Four priority areas for action, aligning with the recommendations of the QAO report, have been progressed over the last three financial years to respond to system pressures and allow for the delivery of coronial services more effectively and efficiently into the future. For example, legislative changes have allowed for preliminary examinations to assist in minimising impacts on families.

The 2020-21 financial year marks phase 3 of the reform process, which is 'Sustainability for the future'.

Temporary funding has enabled the establishment of a second coronial registrar within the Coroners Court, to respond quickly to apparent natural causes deaths and, where appropriate, divert them from the coronial system. Additional temporary resourcing also strengthened case management support provided to coroners and improved responsiveness to families.

Ongoing funding needs will be considered as part of the 2021-22 budget process.