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68 OPINION

EDITORIAL

Sunday Mail

Slap in the face for the victims

The shocking revelation that \$19.5m earmarked to clear rape kit backlogs was instead spent on swanky new offices for forensic managers is a slap in the face to sexual assault victims.

And it also provides a sobering lesson to all levels of government – money cannot just be thrown at “fixing” problems without any checks and balances to ensure it is spent appropriately.

Dr Kirsty Wright’s explosive report into Forensic Science Queensland (FSQ), released this week, shows the DNA debacle in this state will have consequences for years to come.

Appeal after appeal will be heard in the state’s courts – but more disturbingly, victims of crime will continue to bear the brunt of the unforgivable bungling of evidence dating back to 2007.

In an exclusive interview with The Sunday Mail, Dr Wright revealed her disgust at the inexplicable decision to spend \$19.5m of the \$29.5m the former Labor government gave to FSQ to clear the rape kit backlog on facility “infrastructure” and new equipment.

At the time the lab had a backlog of 18,000 new samples with crime victims waiting an extra three years for court dates due to delayed DNA evidence.

“These are really vulnerable people and for them to hear that money was allocated to build new offices for managers instead of testing their rape kits or the rape kit of their child, how do you ever restore that trust again?” Dr Wright asked.

And that question has to guide the next steps for the state government – what can it do to restore Queenslanders’ trust in the forensic science process?

It already boosted FSQ’s operational funding by more than \$18m in this year’s budget – but it is clear the Crisafulli government must keep an eye on how it is spent.

The rape kit backlog must be cleared as a priority, with the number of untested kits skyrocketing from 75 in June 2023 to 641 in January this year.

We’ve now had three investigations into the FSQ’s failures – now it is time for Queenslanders to see that genuine action is being taken.

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Tabled ☒

By Leave ☐

MP: Mr. HEB

Clerk's Signature: Murphy