

**COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO DNA PROJECT 13
IN QUEENSLAND**

STATEMENT OF RHYS PARRY

I, Rhys Parry, of Forensic Science Queensland, at [REDACTED] in the State of Queensland, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. I hold a Bachelor of Science with Honours from the University of Queensland.
2. I hold the position of senior scientist in the Forensic Biology Division of Forensic Science Queensland (FSQ).
3. On 27th October 2023, I, together with my FSQ colleagues Emma Caunt, Ingrid Moller, Alicia Quartermain, Kylie Rika, and Angelina Keller, wrote a joint statement for the consideration of the Commission of Inquiry to examine DNA Project 13 concerns. A true and correct copy of this joint statement is marked **RP-1** and is annexed to this Statement.
4. The signatories to this joint statement were all whistle-blowers from the first Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA testing in Queensland.
5. The joint statement is being provided to this Commission to provide the groups perspective on some of the recent events and opinions given in the media.
6. All the facts and circumstances declared in this statement are within my own knowledge and belief, except for the facts and circumstances declared from information only, and where applicable, my means of knowledge and sources of information are contained in this statement.
7. I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act 1867.

TAKEN AND DECLARED before me at 39 Kessels Rd, Coopers Plains in the State of Brisbane this 27th day of October 2023.

[REDACTED]
Rhys Parry

[REDACTED]
Witness

Commissioner Bennett

We, the whistle-blowers from the first Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA testing in Queensland, are writing to you to provide our perspective on some of the recent events and opinions given in the media.

For years, several scientists within the Forensic DNA Analysis department at Queensland Health tried to push for changes to be made regarding practices being carried out within the department. We ultimately had to resort to providing witness testimony in the first Inquiry at significant personal and occupational risk, to begin the process of positive change within the laboratory.

Our concern, as forensic scientists, has always been that the issues we repeatedly tried to raise over many years about scientific management and practices in the Queensland Forensic DNA Analysis laboratory would negatively impact the justice outcomes for Queenslanders. We were continually silenced. At significant personal and professional risk, we came forward publicly through the Commission of Inquiry to ensure that our voices could finally be heard, and positive change could occur.

In the October 2nd article in *The Australian*, *Shandee Blackburn's Mum Rejects Lab Review*, Dr Wright asserts that "...scientists will not come forward for the internal review." In our opinion, this is simply not true. We are more confident than at any time in the past that we are in a position to raise concerns and freely discuss differences of scientific opinion in an appropriate format. For Dr. Wright to state that the Interim Advisory Board would automatically side with Professor Linzi Wilson-Wilde with regards to issues raised by scientists is inappropriate, in our opinion, for two principal reasons. Firstly, it suggests that Professor Wilson-Wilde would not deal with any concerns raised in an unbiased manner when there is no evidence for this. In fact, we (the authors) have found Professor Wilson-Wilde to be very open and responsive to meaningful scientific discussions when differences of scientific opinion have arisen, and often speaks on the critical importance of diversity of thought in our all-staff meetings. Secondly, Dr. Wright's statement denies agency to the remainder of the Board, who by logical extension of her statement, must also be assumed to be under inappropriate influence from Professor Wilson-Wilde. It is concerning to observe Dr. Wright publicly suggesting that Professor Wilson-Wilde has undue sway over the other board members such as, for example, Walter Sofronoff KC or Julie Dick SC and that the latter would not take staff concerns seriously or would deal unprofessionally with scientist's concerns, with little in the way of tangible evidence to prove these assertions. We don't support this position and we don't believe that this is valid criticism.

Many of the recommendations are a direct result of our discussions with former Commissioner Sofronoff. These required changes are now being implemented under the direction and guidance of Professor Wilson-Wilde, whose goal and focus, in our opinion and observation, is to strive for best scientific practice. Since the arrival of Professor Wilson-Wilde, many of the recommended changes have been finalised or are in the process of being implemented.

We agree that Project 13 was deeply flawed and should never have been allowed to progress, but also note that processes have changed significantly since the project's initial

implementation. Many of the flaws of the subsequent processes were discussed in the previous Commission and we are of the understanding that significant additional work was undertaken in examining these issues by the Commission beyond what was disclosed through the public hearings. We are more than confident that the current recommendation to fully reassess the extraction processes (Rec #105 in particular) within the laboratory is sufficient to rectify any current issues that are derived from the legacy of Project 13.

The COI Recommendations set the roadmap to reform our laboratory from the ground up, and under new leadership Forensic Science Queensland is going beyond the recommendations to review all current and past practices to identify and address any affected cases. We are heartened to know that these actions are already having a positive impact on the justice system, and we feel confident that we are now in an environment in which we can raise scientific concerns and be supported to achieve sound resolutions. With Professor Wilson-Wilde's leadership and scientific expertise, and the support of the broader Forensic Science Queensland leadership team, we remain focussed on helping to develop our laboratory into a world class facility for Queensland.

Sincerely,

Rhys Parry

Emma Caunt

Ingrid Moeller

Alicia Quartermain

Kylie Rika

Angelina Keller

