



RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Hearing Date: 6 April 2022

Directed to: Ian McPhan

1. Ms Crozier Page no. 34

Question asked: You mentioned the audits and the crosschecking from your laboratory, so what are the inaccuracies that are picked up? What is the percentage that you find through that audit process?

Response:

Prior to the introduction of TestTracker, COVID referrals were written on paper referrals and required manual entry of data from the paper into the Laboratory's computer. With the paper based entry and with high volumes of testing during the May-June 2020 wave of the pandemic, the error rate was approximately 8-9%. Errors were predominantly with mobile phone numbers – mobile numbers are used for texting the COVID result. After the introduction of TestTracker, error rates reduced to 2% (Dec 21 – Jan 22) as TestTracker entry is via electronic link. In addition, TestTracker has crosschecks on key data elements such as phone numbers. Please note that our systems picked up these errors. The errors create downstream problems and delays to reporting, but not incorrect results.

2. Ms Kealy Page no. 36

Question asked: Mr McPHAN: I mentioned that I had a call from one of the health secretaries around April 2020. We were in discussion prior to that. At that time there was no real expectation of a major surge, but obviously COVID was well and truly present in other countries. We were looking at it at that stage, and we had plans to ramp up. Look, from memory I think we had in casual discussions said that we would increase our capacity by, I think it was, the end of April, and then I had a call from the secretary, who asked whether we could bring that forward, so we brought that forward by—

Ms KEALY: Sorry, that was Euan Wallace who called you to ask you to ramp up testing?

Mr McPHAN: No, I was just trying to think of his name.

Ms KEALY: Kym Peake, sorry.

Mr McPHAN: His name is in my phone. I would have to look it up for you, sorry. But no, it was not.

Ms KEALY: If we could get that detail, it would be helpful to know.



Mr McPHAN: Yes. Sure. I will take that on notice.

Response:

- My initial contact from the Dept of Health was by Mr Terry Symonds. Call was on or around 5th March 2020.

3. Ms Kealy Page no. 37

Question asked: So about June 2020 you would have started testing?

Response:

First COVID test performed in Dorevitch Pathology on 14-March-2020, approximately one week after the call from Mr Symonds.

4. Ms Kealy Page no. 37

Question asked: When was the department first flagged that the demand for testing was exceeding your capacity?

Response:

Throughout the pandemic, the Department of Health were in regular contact about operational matters regarding collection, testing, and support of the Public Health initiatives. This regular contact included a weekly contract performance meeting (held every Thursday). As a routine, the Department monitored performance daily. When performance of our laboratory appears to be drifting, the Department informs us, myself included, via text and/or phone call, that the turn-around-times are getting to be of concern and ask us about causes and what actions we're taking to rectify. With regard to the Dec 21-Jan 22 outbreak, the Department of Health was in daily contact, in fact, multiple times per day at peak periods.

5. Ms Kealy Page no. 37

Question asked: So did you put the request out for further support in the same way you had been asked for further support for the public system?



Response:

Background – our Business Continuity Plans include extending hours of operations to maximise capacity, then if we were nearing capacity, sending lower priority samples interstate to our sister laboratories.

During the Dec 21 – Jan 22 wave, operating hours had already been extended to 24/7 as planned, however, as the wave occurred simultaneously in all states, the second element to our Continuity plan could not be put in place as testing was at capacity in all states.

So, in answer to the question, we implemented our Continuity plans to the extent that we could.

