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Criminal justice system—reliability and integration of data

Report 14: 2016–17

Queensland Audit Office

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26 April 2017

The Honourable P Wellington MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

Report to Parliament

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, and is titled *Criminal justice system – reliability and integration of data* (Report 14: 2016-17).

In accordance with s.67 of the Act, would you please arrange for the report to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

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Summary

Queensland's criminal justice system prevents, detects, and investigates crimes. It delivers judicial processes, manages prisoners and offenders, and provides rehabilitation services.

The Queensland Police Service and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (through its Queensland Courts Service, Queensland Corrective Services, and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions) are the prime agencies for delivering these services. Throughout this report, we refer to these entities collectively as criminal justice entities.

These entities collect valuable data on occurrences (crimes, traffic matters, missing persons, domestic violence, and other incidents), people, and property, and on their activities. They use the data when making decisions about their activities and when allocating resources.

The government relies on the statistics and reports generated from this data to set its policy direction. The public rely on it for an appreciation of levels of community safety.

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the Queensland Police Service recorded 2 174 144 occurrences with 2 809 283 reportable offences into the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system. The Queensland Police Service define a reportable offence as any act reported to, or becoming known by, the police that they consider, *prima facie* (at first view, before investigation), to be in breach of the criminal law.

Figure A shows, for the occurrences, the number resulting in one or more charges by the Queensland Police Service, the cases lodged in Queensland's courts, the defendants found guilty, and the number of offenders imprisoned.

Figure A
Criminal justice system statistics: 2010–11 to 2015–16

839 097
occurrences resulting in a charge

712 571
cases lodged in Queensland Courts

254 644
defendants found guilty

26 752
offenders imprisoned
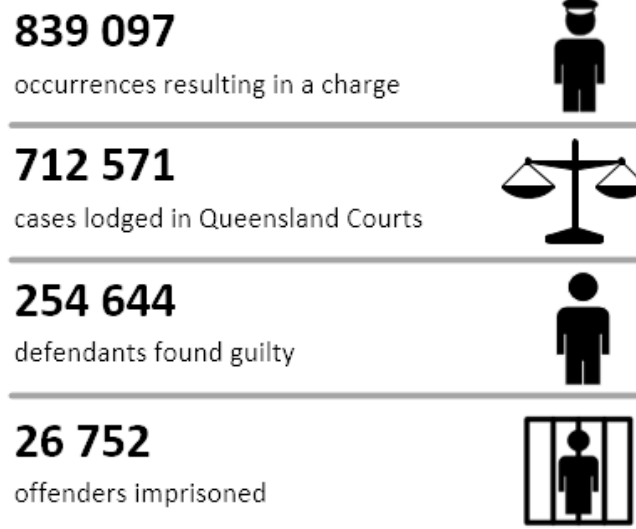
Note: Each occurrence may result in multiple charges. The number of cases lodged in Queensland Courts only includes cases lodged by the Queensland Police Service (an additional nine per cent of cases are lodged by other entities).

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Classifying offences

For criminal justice data to be useful, it must be reliable; otherwise it can lead to incorrect perceptions and decisions. For example, a combination of under-reporting crime rates and inflating clearance rates can have a significant effect on how the community perceives crime and the effectiveness of police.

High risk areas for data error include offences police classify as:

- *unfounded*—where there is sufficient evidence to indicate the offence did not occur

- *cancelled*—when the offence should never have been recorded, such as an offence that occurred overseas or interstate, or where the Queensland Police Service refer the matter to the Australian Federal Police

- *solved*—when police have identified an offender for the offence and have sufficient evidence to determine the offender committed the offence. There are several subcategories that make up the solved category, including *solved—offender bar to prosecution* (meaning there is some legal or other factor inhibiting the prosecution of the offender)

- *withdrawn*—when the offence occurred but the victim withdraws the complaint. There are two categories for withdrawal: a victim can formally sign a document withdrawing the complaint (referred to as a 6A withdrawal); or a victim can indicate he or she wishes to withdraw the complaint but has not signed a document to this effect (referred to as a 6B withdrawal).

A police officer's decision on how and whether an offence is recorded in crime reports is often subjective. It can occur during times of anxiety and trauma for victims and, at times, is based on limited information. The officer's individual judgement in these circumstances determines whether a crime is reported and how that crime is recorded (for example, whether to record a crime as a robbery or theft). This can change as the investigation progresses, further information becomes available, and the outcome of the investigation is known.

For this reason, offences can necessarily and appropriately be re-classified and have their status changed. This can include changing the status from *unsolved* to *solved*, *unfounded*, *cancelled*, or *withdrawn*. While changes are legitimately required throughout police investigations, appropriate controls are required to ensure the change is valid. Such controls are particularly important when the change has the potential to lead to no further action by police. The reliability of the data at this important point has a significant impact on the process of justice. Consequently, the Queensland Police Service needs to monitor and manage the risk of incorrect changes to offence classifications on reported crime and clearance rates.

Incorrectly classifying serious offences as less serious can also influence people's perception of crime and of the effectiveness of police. This risk also needs to be monitored and managed.

Integrated criminal justice data

Reliable and integrated criminal justice data has the potential to enhance public knowledge on factors that contribute to crime, and what society might do to prevent it. It forms the basis for:

- richer insights into areas such as mental health, substance abuse, homelessness and education

- criminal justice entities reducing inefficiencies by assessing and monitoring the path of individuals through the system.

Recognising the value of integrating data across the system, the criminal justice entities undertook the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program between 2002–03 and 2009–10. It was a cross-agency program established to create an integrated information sharing system between the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services, and the then Department of Communities.

Reliability of crime statistics

Over recent years, questions have been raised in Queensland and other jurisdictions about the accuracy and reliability of reported crime statistics. Those querying Queensland's crime statistics include legal groups, academics, and politicians. In 2016, the Queensland Parliament's Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee referred concerns to us about the accuracy of the reoffending rates reported by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (specifically, Queensland Corrective Services).

Some jurisdictions, such as Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, have established crime statistics agencies independent of the police to analyse and report crime statistics. Queensland currently does not have such a body. The government committed $8.4 million to establish an independent crime statistics body, but the exact nature and role of this body has not yet been determined.

The main role of independent crime statistics bodies in other jurisdictions is usually to analyse and report on criminal justice data. A significant constraint on these bodies is their reliance on data captured by criminal justice entities. Analysis and reporting based on inaccurate and incomplete data can lead to incorrect conclusions and poor decision-making.

Audit objective

In this audit, we examined how well Queensland's criminal justice entities capture, report, and use data to ensure its reliability and integration across the justice system. This is the second of two reports.

In this report, we assess timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of crime data. We also assess how criminal justice entities report data and exchange data across the criminal justice system.

Our first report, *Criminal Justice System—prison sentences* (Report 4: 2016–17) assessed how effectively the criminal justice entities capture and use data for calculating and administering prison sentences. We identified gaps in processes for the detection, quality assurance, recording, reporting, and integration of sentencing data, resulting in prisoners being released in error or unlawfully detained.

Audit conclusions

The Queensland Police Service has an unacceptable amount of crime data across the state that is incomplete, inaccurate, and wrongly classified. Contributing to this are officers' poor understanding or use of data classification rules, poor guidance, inappropriate data classification practices and inadequate quality assurance controls. As a result, reported crime statistics are questionable at best and unreliable at worst, and should be treated with caution.

Underlying the crime statistics, we undertook a statewide assessment of Queensland Police QPRIME system data. Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, we found 22 per cent of all occurrence reports with reportable offences recorded in the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system, were incomplete, inaccurate or both. We also identified trends in *withdrawn* and *unfounded* offences that warranted investigation. The Queensland Police Service was responsive in investigating these during our audit and found a statewide error rate of 9.4 per cent. This ranged from 2.1 per cent to 21 per cent across individual Queensland Police districts. The Queensland Police Service is not systematically monitoring its crime data and investigating trends and risk areas, and is therefore not identifying these errors on a timely basis.

In the district, we examined in detail (the Gold Coast district), we found governance over crime data is poor. Unclear guidance and inadequate understanding of data classification rules contributed to errors and inconsistent classification of offences. Additionally, officers' inappropriate practices in this district of altering crime data statistics have gone unnoticed or unchallenged at senior levels. Gold Coast staff reported that an unhealthy focus on achieving performance targets, rather than data quality, has contributed to these results.

Criminal justice data errors and quality assurance failures are not isolated to the Queensland Police Service. Queensland Corrective Services' quality assurance processes over its public reporting has long been flawed. It did not detect its inaccurate reporting of reoffending rates for more than ten years, and its inaccurate reporting of offender to staff ratios for four years.

The various police and corrective services data quality issues point to an enduring lack of vigilance across the criminal justice system in reporting reliably and transparently. This may erode community confidence and it indicates more rigorous and independent quality assurance is required.

The Integrated Justice Information Strategy program cost $62 million and resulted in the automation of some processes. However, the lack of integration and linking remains a barrier to sharing criminal justice data in a timely, complete, and accurate manner. Queensland's criminal justice entities remain unable to perform efficient or effective system-wide analysis and reporting. The majority of the criminal justice system remains manual and unlinked, impeding the program's planned benefits of:

- greater capacity to investigate and prevent crime

- more effective policy development, evaluation, and implementation

- more expeditious service and management of processes

- improved safety for the community and criminal justice personnel.

The needs identified in the original Integrated Justice Information Strategy business case are as compelling now as they were then. The criminal justice entities recognise this and are progressing with new projects aimed at improving integration.

Audit findings

The Queensland Police Service has improved the timeliness of its data capture from 2010–11 to 2015–16, but not quality and completeness.

Once captured, criminal justice data is not shared efficiently or effectively across the entities that need it.

The reliability of criminal justice data

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the Queensland Police Service increasingly recorded data in a timely manner—from 79 per cent of occurrence reports for reportable offences entered into QPRIME on time (within four hours) in 2010–11 to 89 per cent in 2015–16.

However, during the same period, the completeness and accuracy of these reports did not improve—22 per cent of occurrence reports for reportable offences recorded in QPRIME were in error. Of these reports:

- 69.4 per cent were incomplete

- 28.6 per cent were inaccurate

- 2 per cent were both incomplete and inaccurate.

A Policelink review also found 12 per cent of occurrence reports for reportable offences between July and September 2016 were incorrectly classified, counted, or finalised. (Policelink is the Queensland Police Service's telephone reporting service for the public to report non-urgent incidents and request police assistance in non-emergency matters. It is also used by police to report incidents.)

Processes to assure quality

The Queensland Police Service systems and processes for assuring the quality, completeness, and correct classification of crime data are inadequate. The systems and processes do not include monitoring of data and data trends to identify and check for changes that may indicate poor practice or manipulation.

The Policelink and QPRIME manuals, which are intended to assist staff and officers to classify data correctly, are vague and open to interpretation.

Policelink performs a very limited quality assurance function, only conducting targeted reviews or responding to specific requests. This is partly due to its relatively low staff numbers compared to the volume of crime reports.

No assessment occurs of the completeness, accuracy, or classification of most reports police officers submit directly through the Policelink Intranet Reporting process. This includes cases where a police officer submits a supplementary report to modify or change the original occurrence report—including *solved*, *unfounded*, *withdrawn*, or *cancelled* offences.

For the small proportion of reports validated by Policelink staff, only a cursory assessment is performed. They search for key words, rather than assess the adequacy of the investigative information included in the report. As a result, offences are at times inappropriately *withdrawn* or classified as *unfounded* or as *solved—offender bar to prosecution* without sufficient evidence to support these decisions. These categories affect the accuracy of the state's reported crime statistics.

Crime managers in each police district are responsible for issuing investigation tasks and monitoring data quality. When crime managers, or other supervising staff, identify a data quality concern, they issue a task in QPRIME (called a data quality task) to the relevant police officer for action. Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the number of data quality tasks crime managers and supervising staff issued almost doubled from 62 894 to 120 390. Once issued, data quality tasks are not monitored or reviewed. Consequently, some police receiving these tasks ignore them, marking them as complete without taking action.

The Public Safety Business Agency's Statistical Services unit (the Statistical Services unit), provides statistical services to the Queensland Police Service. These two agencies do not have a service level agreement or any other document in place to define the service levels expected between them.

The Queensland Police Service and the Public Safety Business Agency told us that the Statistical Services unit is responsible for the extraction and reporting of crime data for the Queensland Police Service, including the external reporting of crime data. This unit does not perform any quality assurance procedures over the reported data. The Queensland Police Service does not require the Statistical Services unit to provide quality assurance and has not put alternate arrangements in place. As a result, quality assurance does not occur.

The Statistical Services unit has a procedure in place to manage risks associated with releasing information requested by external agencies. However, it does not have appropriate and relevant guidelines, policy, and training information to provide for accurate and consistent reporting, classification, and management of crime statistics.

The Gold Coast district

The Gold Coast district had the highest number of offences *withdrawn* between 2010–11 and 2015–16 compared with any other Queensland Police Service district. While it didn't have the highest ratio of offences *withdrawn* as a percentage of reported offences, its percentage increased over this period from 3.1 per cent to 6.6 per cent. The Gold Coast district is currently 1.8 percentage points higher than the state average of 4.8 per cent.

Officers in the Gold Coast district have employed methods aimed at having victims withdraw their complaints to increase the clearance rate, including:

- soliciting victims to withdraw complaints

- sending victims letters requiring them to respond within seven days or police will 'presume' the victim wants no further action and will withdraw the complaint

- adopting a three strikes policy, where if they cannot contact victims after three attempts, they change the complaint to *withdrawn*.

These complaints relate to offences including assault (both serious and less serious), burglary, stealing, and wilful damage offences.

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the Gold Coast district had the second lowest rate of offences being classified as *unfounded* (four per cent) compared to the state (4.9 per cent). The rate increased during this period, as it did across the state.

We identified practices in the Gold Coast district of police incorrectly changing the status of reports from *unsolved* to *unfounded*. These practices are not in accordance with the national crime recording standard or the Queensland Police Service's definitions of *unfounded*. This results in these offences being excluded from the reported crime rate, which reduces the reported unsolved crime rate.

The Queensland Police Service does not provide clear guidance around classifying offences as *solved—offender bar to prosecution*, which means this status for solving offences is inconsistently and subjectively used and open to intentional misuse. Incorrectly finalising offences in this way inflates the Queensland Police Service's clearance rate. There has been a sharp increase in offences being finalised as *solved—offender bar to prosecution* across several divisions within the Gold Coast district.

The Queensland Police Service has investigated the issues that have come to light during this audit and acknowledge the impact these issues have had on crime statistics. Its statewide review of *unfounded* and *withdrawn* offences found a 9.4 per cent error, ranging from 2.1 per cent in the Moreton district to 21 per cent in the Logan district.

Reporting corrective services data

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Queensland Corrective Services) reported incorrect data on the rate of prisoners and offenders returning to corrective services from 2004–05 to 2014–15. It had consistently under-reported the rate of prisoners and over-reported the rate of offenders returning to corrective services for this ten-year period. (Offenders are people managed in community corrections as opposed to prisoners in gaol.)

It reported these incorrect figures due to outdated data extraction scripts (the internal program instructions which control how data is extracted) and poor quality assurance practices.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Queensland Corrective Services) also incorrectly reported on its offender to staff ratios. Human error, poor definitions, and ineffective quality assurance practices led to it misattributing non-operational staff to the operational staff category.

As a result, it under-reported the number of offenders per operational staff member and over-reported the number of offenders to non-operational staff. Its offender to all staff reporting was not affected. These offender to staff ratios are measures of efficiency and are used to make decisions on resourcing, staff workloads, and pressures. Inaccurate information affects the quality of decision-making.

Integrating criminal justice data

The Integrated Justice Information Strategy program (the program) was designed to improve the integration of the criminal justice system and enable more efficient sharing of information between criminal justice entities.

The total cost of the program was approximately $62 million, which included around $42 million spent on projects and $20 million on maintenance and overheads.

Poor governance, scope changes, and siloed approaches resulted in the program failing to deliver planned outcomes. From July 2002 to June 2010, 16 projects were undertaken under the program, with six projects fully implemented, six partially implemented, and four discontinued.

The strength of the program design was its complementary suite of projects. Failing to complete the full suite of projects has diluted the benefits the criminal justice entities received.

A total of $960 241 was spent on four discontinued projects. Some of these projects have subsequently continued, at additional expense. For example, the domestic violence project was discontinued within the program in July 2008 after the program steering committee assessed it as a low priority at that time. Subsequently, justice agencies have directed $1 591 881 to streamlining the electronic transfer of domestic violence applications and orders. They estimate an additional $500 000 will be spent by completion.

While the program has provided some improvement in information flows, Queensland's criminal justice system remains unintegrated. As we identified in *Criminal Justice System—prison sentences* (Report 4: 2016–17), the limited interface between QPRIME, the Queensland Wide Interlinked Courts (QWIC) system and the Queensland Corrective Services' Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS) results in multiple manual points of entry, inefficiency, duplication of effort, and an increase in the risk of an error occurring. This lack of integration hinders the accessibility and timely sharing of data across the criminal justice system.

The program also sought to integrate criminal justice data to deliver system-wide statistical information. Despite spending a total of approximately $6.3 million on four projects to integrate the data, it remains unintegrated. This is the result of the partial implementation and de-scoping of some projects.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions presents as a significant gap in the integration of criminal justice data. It lacks basic systems interfaces with the Queensland Police Service and courts and is reliant on manual inputs and hard copy documents.

The Queensland Police Service, through its QPRIME system, assigns a 'single person identifier' to anyone they deal with. This provides some ability to follow an offender through the criminal justice system, but it has limitations. The criminal justice entities do not have the capability to effectively or efficiently follow a person through all segments of the criminal justice system and link all of their contacts and occurrences across the system.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service:

1. improves its offence standards and classification guidelines. (Chapter 2)

    Improvements are to include clarifying the definitions of offences and the rules and examples for classifying and re-classifying offences.

2. strengthens its independent quality assurance processes for data capture, classification, amending, updating, and reporting of crime data. (Chapter 2)

    Strengthening quality assurance should have regard to:

    -   developing and implementing a quality assurance framework and guidelines

    -   regularly auditing and reporting on the quality, completeness, and accuracy of QPRIME data and data classification

    -   identifying types of data and practices at risk of error or manipulation and ensuring appropriate controls are in place to ensure validity

    -   monitoring the data and data trends to identify and check for changes which may indicate poor practice or manipulation

    -   ensuring accountable and independent decision-making where issues or disputes arise around the data or the status of a report.

3. trains all staff responsible for crime data integrity and quality appropriately. (Chapter 2)

    Staff should be trained in the Queensland recording guidelines, national crime recording standard manual, and the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification.

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service and the Public Safety Business Agency:

4. ensure there are appropriate guidelines, policy, and training for reporting, classifying, and managing crime statistics. (Chapter 2)

5. include in reported crime statistics detail of what is included and excluded from the statistics. (Chapter 2)

    For example, noting that cleared offences includes both solved and withdrawn offences will improve the reader's understanding of what this measure is reporting.

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General:

6. reviews its quality assurance practices for data extraction scripts for reporting of corrective services measures. (Chapter 2)

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Public Safety Business Agency:

7. collaborate with relevant agencies and stakeholders to progress integrating the criminal justice system. (Chapter 3)

Reference to comments

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we provided a copy of this report to the Queensland Police Service, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and the Public Safety Business Agency for comment.

We received responses from all three agencies. Their responses are in Appendix A.

Report structure

Chapter	
Chapter 1	provides the background to the audit and the context needed to understand the audit findings and conclusions.
Chapter 2	evaluates the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of crime and criminal justice data and its reporting.
Chapter 3	examines information flows and data linkages across the criminal justice system and whether they are adequate for entities to analyse trends, improve systems, and develop effective policy.

Report cost

This is the second of two reports on the criminal justice system. The first report, *Criminal justice system—prison sentences* (Report 4: 2016–17) was tabled in parliament in November 2016.

The total cost of the audit, across the two reports, was $630 000.

1. Context

In a 2008 review of Queensland's criminal justice system, Justice Moynihan AO, QC described an effective criminal justice system as providing:

> … equal justice for all according to law by disposing of cases impartially, fairly, expeditiously … with the minimum but necessary use of public resources.

Justice Moynihan described an effective criminal justice system as one that, as far as human fallibility allows, minimises risks of innocent people being convicted and guilty people being acquitted.

Reliable and accessible data is crucial in ensuring the criminal justice system is fulfilling its role effectively, efficiently, and economically. More broadly, the Queensland Government, the public, and sections of the community rely on this information for decision-making, assessing safety, and conducting research.

Roles and responsibilities

The criminal justice entities each have specific roles within the criminal justice system. Collectively the police, prosecutors, courts, and corrective services are predominantly responsible for:

- preventing, identifying and investigating criminal offences
- prosecuting those accused of committing criminal offences
- carrying out the sentences of courts.

Throughout this report, we refer to the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General—through its Queensland Courts Service, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and Queensland Corrective Services—as criminal justice entities. We refer to the collective services these entities provide as the criminal justice system.

While each of these entities has discrete roles to play within the criminal justice system, they are nevertheless interconnected and reliant on one another.

Figure 1A demonstrates offenders' movements through the criminal justice system and illustrates the interconnectivity of entity roles. We provide more detail in Appendix D.

Figure 1A
Movement through the criminal justice system and entity involvement
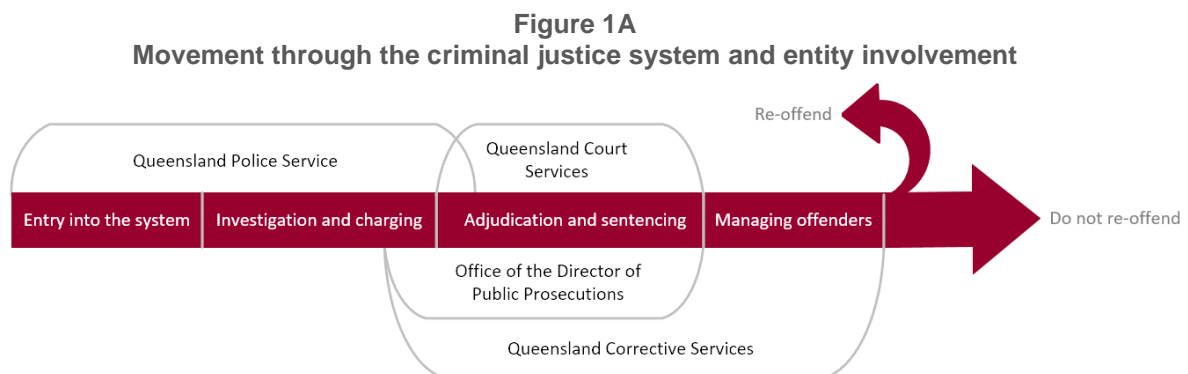
Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Queensland Police Service

The Queensland Police Service is the primary law enforcement agency for Queensland.

In the majority of cases, the Queensland Police Service is the gateway for offenders and data entering the criminal justice system. It is the primary agency for the investigation of crimes and charging of offenders.

From 2010–11 to 2015–16, 91 per cent of criminal court matters originated from offences reported to the Queensland Police Service and investigations it undertook. The other nine per cent came from other entities, including government organisations such as the Australian Federal Police.

The Queensland Police Service and the other criminal justice entities rely on the timely, complete, and accurate recording and sharing of crime data. Information captured by the Queensland Police Service is used for multiple purposes, including:

- conducting operations—investigations, tasking, and intelligence
- recording criminal histories
- reporting crime statistics.

It is therefore crucial that the information collected, recorded, and shared by the Queensland Police Service is accurate, complete, and timely.

The Queensland Police Service states in its management support manual that it is committed to the integrity of data so that information is accurate and current, writing: 'information integrity is critical for quality service provision, evaluation of services and the maintenance of public safety'.

Queensland currently does not have an agency which independently compiles and analyses criminal justice data and publishes crime statistics at a system level. Crime statistics are agency-specific and there is no complete picture of criminal justice issues across Queensland.

The Queensland Police Service publicly reports its crime data through:

- service delivery statements
- the Australian Government Productivity Commission Report on Government Services
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- the Australian Institute of Criminology
- the Queensland Police Annual Statistical Review
- other sources.

Two key measures the Queensland Police Service report against are the:

- rate (per 100 000) of personal safety offences and property security offences
- percentage of personal safety offences and property security offences cleared within 30 days.

Personal safety offences include homicide, assault, sexual assault, robbery, and other offences against the person. Property security offences include unlawful entry, property damage, motor vehicle theft, other theft, and other property offences.

Public Safety Business Agency

The Public Safety Business Agency provides information and communications technology support to the Queensland Police Service. This includes managing the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system and generating statistical information on behalf of the Queensland Police Service.

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has overall administrative responsibility for the justice system in Queensland. It provides the resources and infrastructure to enable the criminal justice system to operate effectively. It administers:

- the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
- the Queensland Courts Service
- Queensland Corrective Services.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions represents the state in criminal cases. Its main function is to prosecute criminal matters in the:

- Magistrates Court (a limited number of matters—police prosecutors prosecute most Magistrates Court matters)
- Childrens Court
- District Court
- Supreme Court
- Court of Appeal
- High Court of Australia
- Mental Health and other courts.

In many cases, it is the conduit between the police and their investigative and charging functions and the courts performing the adjudication and sentencing role. It also has a responsibility to act as the solicitor on the record for the Crime and Corruption Commission in confiscation proceedings under the *Criminal Proceeds Confiscation Act 2002*.

Queensland Courts Service

The judiciary is responsible for adjudication and sentencing related to court matters.

The Queensland Courts Service is responsible for the administrative functioning of the courts. This includes:

- administering the operations of the courts
- ensuring the complete, accurate, and timely capture and recording of court information, including verdicts and sentences
- coordinating some functions of the courts with other elements of the criminal justice system such as the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Corrective Services.

The Queensland Courts Service records and stores data required for the functioning of the courts in its Queensland Wide Interlinked Courts (QWIC) system.

Queensland Corrective Services

Queensland Corrective Services is responsible for the humane containment, supervision, and rehabilitation of offenders. In cases where an offender is remanded in custody pending court proceedings, its role might start soon after the offender is charged with a criminal offence. In other cases, it starts when the offender is found guilty and receives either a custodial or community-based sentence.

When Queensland Corrective Services receives a new offender, it records the offender's personal details, sentence, and court result in its Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS). It relies on its IOMS system for case management and, in conjunction with other systems such as its Lattice human resource system, for reporting on key performance measures.

Queensland Corrective Services reports re-offending rates through the Australian Government Productivity Commission Report on Government Services. Among the measures it reports are:

- offenders and prisoners returned to corrective services within two years
- offenders returned to community corrections (community supervision orders) within two years
- prisoners returned to prison within two years
- offender to staff ratios.

(Offenders are people who have served their sentence in the community, such as probation, community service or parole, as opposed to prisoners who serve their time in a gaol.)

Independent crime statistics office

In response to concerns about the reporting of crime statistics, the Queensland Government committed, in its 2016–17 state budget, a total of $8.4 million funding over three years to the establishment of an independent crime statistics body. The government is yet to determine the terms of reference and model for the proposed crime statistics body.

Some other jurisdictions, such as Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, have established crime statistics agencies independent of the police to analyse and report crime statistics.

The main roles of these agencies in other jurisdictions tends to be to analyse data and trends and report on crime data. A significant constraint on these bodies is their reliance on data captured by criminal justice entities. No matter how technically good the analysis is, the outcome will be flawed if the source data is poor, inaccurate, incomplete, or wrongly classified.

Analysis and reporting based on inaccurate and incomplete data can lead to incorrect conclusions and poor decision-making.

Types of criminal justice data

Analysis of criminal justice data broadly occurs at either an entity level or across the criminal justice system. In either event, the analysis can serve operational or statistical purposes and be for either internal (entity) or external (public) use. Figure 1B details some of the different characteristics that can distinguish operational data from statistical data.

Figure 1B
Operational and statistical data differences

Type of data	General characteristics
Operational	▪ **type of data:** tends to be more detailed data and can include narrative and text data ▪ **used for:** directing operations such as tasking and allocation of resources ▪ **used by:** lower level management and operational staff ▪ **confidence levels:** timeliness may be an issue, requiring balance against the level of accuracy and completeness.
Statistical	▪ **type of data:** aggregated and linked data which is usually quantitative ▪ **used for:** performance and gap analysis, and informing policy and funding decisions ▪ **used by:** executive, management, and external users ▪ **confidence levels:** accuracy and completeness are less likely to be compromised by timeliness.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Entity level data

Both operational and statistical data are usually used within an entity. Some data will be relevant for both purposes and some will be specific to either operational or statistical needs. For this reason, entities need to ensure they have appropriate systems, processes, and practices to effectively and efficiently capture, store, and extract or use the data for both purposes.

System level data

In 1998, the then director-general of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission approached the Criminal Justice Commission to help identify factors responsible for the growth in Queensland's prison population.

The report on this concluded that the lack of coordinated systems across the criminal justice system significantly constrained the capacity of government to identify the consequences of justice system policy. In 2002, the government, in response to these findings, created a program of initiatives called the Integrated Justice Information Strategy.

Police processes for recording crime

The information police record

The Queensland Police Service uses its QPRIME system to capture and maintain records of:

- occurrences—these are incidents and can include crimes, traffic matters, missing persons, and domestic violence

- offences—these are the specific crimes which, on face value, are identified as having occurred as part of an occurrence. An occurrence may involve a single offence or many offences. It is crucial that police correctly classify offences in accordance with the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification

- people—these are offenders, persons of interest, victims, witnesses, and people who come into contact with police. The QPRIME database assigns a person a unique identifying number, referred to as a 'single person identifier'. Police link any subsequent involvement they have with that person to the single person identifier. No two people should have the same single person identifier and no one person should have multiple single person identifier numbers.

The public may report crimes to a police officer or in some cases directly to Policelink. Police officers and Policelink staff who receive a complaint about an offence are responsible for accurately and completely recording details about the offence on an occurrence report in QPRIME. A police officer can either record an occurrence report directly in QPRIME through the Policelink Intranet Reporting application or submit the report to a Policelink operator. If a police officer submits a report to a Policelink operator, the operator is responsible for accurately and completely entering the occurrence report in QPRIME.

According to the Queensland Police Service's operational procedure manual, police officers and Policelink operators are required to record an offence in QPRIME within four hours of receiving a complaint.

How police record the outcomes of reported crime

Police are responsible for investigating an offence once it has been reported. Depending on the outcome of an investigation, they assign one of the following status categories:

- *solved*—the offence is solved

- *withdrawn*—the victim wants no further action or formally withdraws the complaint

- *unfounded*—the case is closed because evidence indicates the offence never occurred, or is a civil rather than criminal case

- *cancelled*—this could be for various reasons. Examples include that the report was created in error or the incident happened interstate.

Alternatively, an offence can remain *unsolved* or may *lapse*, for example, when the statute of limitations has passed and the offender can no longer be charged for the offence.

Figure 1C shows the number of offences reported to the Queensland Police Service between 2010–11 and 2015–16, and the number classified as *solved*, *unsolved*, *unfounded*, and *withdrawn*. It shows that the number classified as *unfounded* (4.9 per cent) and *withdrawn* (4.8 per cent) collectively accounted for almost 10 per cent of all reported offences.

Figure 1C
Finalising reported offences between 2010–11 and 2015–16

2 809 283
reported offences

1 649 506
offences solved

879 254
offences unsolved

138 651
offences unfounded

135 596
offences withdrawn

Note: An additional 2 603 offences were *cancelled* and 3 673 offences *lapsed* between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

The crime statistics that police report

In its crime statistics, the Queensland Police Service primarily reports on the rate of offences occurring and the number of offences it has cleared.

It counts:

- offences *solved*, *unsolved*, *withdrawn*, and *lapsed* in the rate of offences (excluding offences classified as *unfounded* and *cancelled*)

- offences *solved* and *withdrawn* in the rate of offences cleared (excluding offences classified as *unsolved*, *lapsed*, *unfounded*, or *cancelled*).

Figure 1D displays what the Queensland Police Service counts and excludes from its reported crime statistics.

Figure 1D
Investigating and finalising an offence
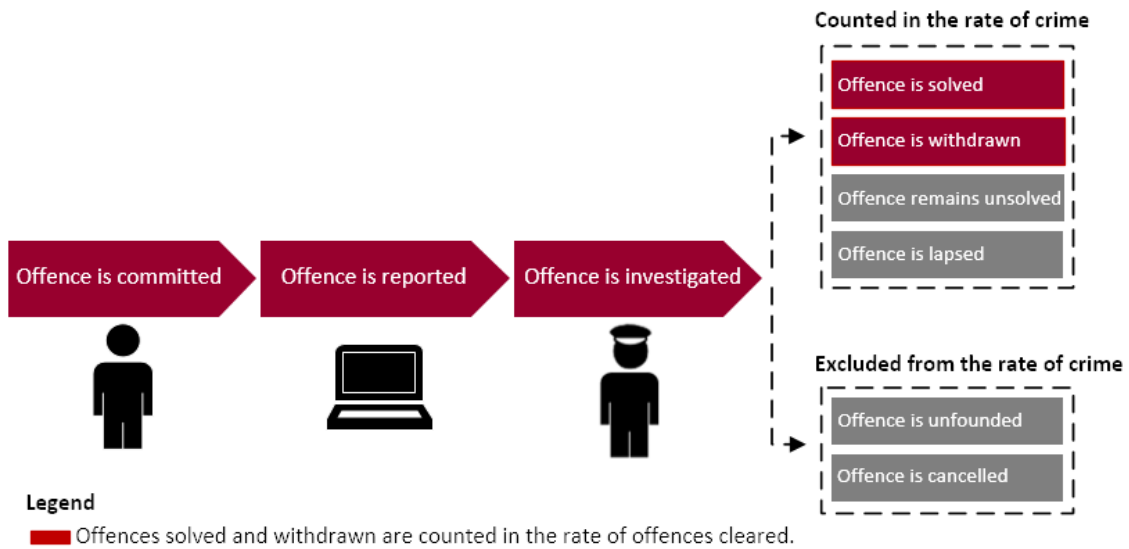
Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Key risk areas for data error and manipulation

We identified the following three broad risk areas for crime data error or manipulation. They are those that:

- reduce the rate of reported offences—creating an impression that fewer crimes are occurring than actually are

- inflate the clearance rate of offences—creating the impression that police are solving more crimes than they actually are

- reduce the severity of offences—by recording an offence as a less serious offence to lower the reported rate of serious crimes.

Under-reporting the crime rate and inflating the clearance rate can, combined, have a significant effect on the perception of crime and the effectiveness of police.

We focused our analysis of QPRIME data on these key risk areas. They are, however, not all of the potential risk areas.

Reducing the rate of reported offences

Reported crime rates can significantly influence the community's perception of safety. These rates tend to be assessed as a measure of the Queensland Police Service's effectiveness in achieving its objectives, particularly those of protecting and supporting the community and preventing and detecting crime.

Reduced reported crime rates can have the effect of increasing the public's feeling of safety and confidence in the police.

We identified the following areas as high risk for data error or manipulation of Queensland's reported crime rate:

- *unfounded*—where there is sufficient evidence to indicate the offence did not occur

- *cancelled*—when the offence should never have been recorded, such as an offence occurring overseas or interstate, or where the matter is no longer being dealt with by Queensland Police, such as matters referred to the Australian Federal Police.

The Queensland Police Service accepts reports of offences on a *prima facie* basis (at first view, before investigation). For staff to change the classification of a reported offence to *unfounded* requires sufficient evidence to indicate the offence did not occur. An absence of evidence that the offence did occur is not adequate for police to categorise an offence as *unfounded*. In such cases, the matter would normally be categorised as *unsolved—pending further information*, and would be counted in the crime statistics.

The classification of offences as *cancelled* is a lower risk, but should be monitored, as the frequency of offences being *cancelled* should be extremely low.

Inflating the clearance rate of reported offences

The rate at which police clear crimes can influence community perceptions of the effectiveness of police in fulfilling their roles of upholding the law and bringing offenders to justice. The reported clearance rate includes offences that are:

- *solved*—when police have identified an offender for the offence and have sufficient evidence to determine that the offender committed the offence. There are a number of subcategories that make up the *solved* category. Among these are the subcategories of *solved—offender bar to prosecution* (meaning there is some legal or other factor inhibiting the prosecution of the offender) and *offender—not in the public interest* (in circumstances where police deem that prosecuting the offender is not in the public interest)

- *withdrawn*—when an offence occurred but the victim withdraws the complaint. There are two categories for withdrawals: a victim can formally sign a document withdrawing the complaint (referred to as a 6A withdrawal), or a victim can indicate he or she wishes to withdraw the complaint but not sign a document to this effect (referred to as a 6B withdrawal).

Manipulating or incorrectly recording offences into these categories will inflate the cleared rate. The *solved—offender bar to prosecution* subcategory is not appropriate for cases where the police have identified an offender but they have insufficient evidence to prosecute. In such cases, the matter would normally be categorised as *unsolved—pending further information*, and would not be cleared.

Unlike with the *offender—not in the public interest* subcategory, police officers are not required to document the approval of their officer in charge when changing the status to the *solved—offender bar to prosecution* subcategory. This makes it a risk area.

Two potential methods for manipulation of the *withdrawn* category are soliciting victims to make a 6A withdrawal of offences, and making subjective determinations that victims have indicated a desire to withdraw their complaint (6B).

Down-classifying offences

From time to time, police submit supplementary reports to change the classification of an offence. In the majority of cases this is because investigation reveals different or additional circumstances to what was initially reported—meaning a more or less serious offence occurred than was originally reported.

However, this is also a potential means for reclassifying serious crimes as less serious crimes. For example, a robbery could be classified as a theft, in which case the offence would no longer be a personal safety offence but would instead be a property offence.

Similarly, changing a break and enter offence to a wilful damage offence changes it from a more serious property offence to a less serious one.

Referral about Queensland Corrective Services data

In February 2011, we reported to parliament the findings of our audit on Queensland Corrective Services' management of offenders subject to supervision in the community (Report 1 for 2011).

In 2013, we conducted an audit to follow up on Queensland Corrective Services' progress in implementing the recommendations of that audit (Report 4 of 2013–14). Based on data reported by Queensland Corrective Services and published in the Australian Government's Report on Government Services, we reported that in Queensland:

> More than one third of community corrections offenders returned to corrective services in 2012–13. This is 13.7 percentage points higher than in 2007–08 and is consistently higher than the national average, which has been decreasing over this period.

We also reported that:

> Queensland's ratio of offenders to operational staff increased from 30.5 in 2011–12 to 35.3 in 2012–13 and has remained higher than the national average over the past six years.

On 14 October 2015, parliament's Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (the committee) conducted a public briefing on our follow-up report. The committee questioned the Commissioner, Queensland Corrective Services about the rate of offenders returning to corrective services in Queensland. In response, the commissioner advised the committee that some anomalies existed in the data reported by Queensland Corrective Services to the Australian Government.

The chair of the committee subsequently wrote to the auditor-general requesting investigation of the Queensland Corrective Services data.

During the course of conducting this audit, the commissioner wrote to the auditor-general to advise that a further error had been detected, this time in the offender to staff ratio data Queensland Corrective Services had reported to the Australian Government.

Integrating data

The Integrated Justice Information Strategy program

The Integrated Justice Information Strategy program (the program) was a cross-agency initiative designed to create an integrated information sharing system between the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services, and the then Department of Communities.

The program's objectives were to:

- streamline criminal justice work processes and ensure the seamless end-to-end management of people and cases within an integrated criminal justice system

- support the criminal justice entities through the provision of timely, accurate, and complete operational information

- enable the integration of criminal justice data across agencies to deliver system-wide statistical information for strategic and policy-related decision-making

- ensure the communication, storage, and retrieval of criminal justice information across all agencies complied with all relevant legislation and standards

- align project activities to whole-of-government initiatives relating to public safety

- integrate the program and entity technologies, services, and processes.

The entities expected that achievement of these objectives would deliver strategic outcomes, specifically:

- greater capacity to investigate and prevent crime

- more effective policy development, evaluation, and implementation

- more expeditious service and management of processes

- improved safety for the community and criminal justice personnel.

The program was originally funded on a project by project basis. Three funding submissions were made to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee between 2002–03 and 2009–10. Figure 1E shows the amount of funding approved by the Cabinet Budget Review Committee.

Figure 1E
Budget for the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program

Budget description	Funding
Original approved capital and expense budget (three budget submissions)	$35 741 982
Additional approved capital funding	$1 077 000
Original approved recurrent budget	$30 975 193
Total	**$67 794 175**

Note: $6 284 168 was unspent and returned to Queensland Treasury.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

The program was broken down into a number of projects over multiple years, each aiming to improve the information sharing capabilities of the criminal justice entities.

From July 2002 to June 2010, 12 of 16 projects were either partially or fully completed, at a total reported cost of $62 746 179. Four projects were discontinued due to budget overruns. These were:

- criminal justice analytics—a centralised data warehouse that could be used to extract statistics and reporting through the use of business intelligence analytical tools

- single view query—a computer search engine intended to give authorised users a single consolidated view of an offender across the criminal justice system

- early notification of indictments—a process change that would have enabled the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to provide advance notification of indictments to be presented at the call over (the date on which an offender's charge is to be handed to the judge)

- domestic violence—information technology enhancements designed to improve the administration, management, and processing of domestic violence applications and orders.

Appendix C provides a description of each project, its approved budget, and actual spend.

Integrated criminal justice

The outcome from the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program was a suite of services and governance arrangements referred to as integrated criminal justice. The integrated criminal justice hub and spoke system has enabled the automatic exchange of information between criminal justice entities, including the:

- electronic transfer of bench charge sheets (which electronically lodges an offender's charge with courts) from the Queensland Police Service's QPRIME system to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's QWIC system

- electronic transfer of court results from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's QWIC system to the Queensland Police Service; Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Youth Justice Division.

Aspects of the criminal justice system still remain disconnected and rely on manual entry points.

Linking data

In the absence of either a system-wide database or integrated system, data collected and held in relevant entities' databases needs to be linked in order for the entities to be able to effectively analyse it. Various initiatives have been undertaken to link data across the criminal justice system, including the offender linking project and the Queensland Police Service's single person identifier.

Offender linking project

When the business case for an integrated justice information strategy was submitted in February 2006, it identified the offender linking project as its highest priority. Originally, the offender linking project intended to create a 'single offender identifier' to link and track offenders across the criminal justice system. The entities did not deliver this. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General reported in its offender linking end of project report that creating a single offender identifier could not be easily achieved. It provided no further detail about the barriers that existed. The offender linking project was redesigned and a map that could link each agency's unique identifiers was created.

The offender linking project concluded in September 2009 at a cost of $3 371 033, having only been implemented by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. No other criminal justice entity has since implemented it.

Single person identifier

The single person identifier is a unique identification number that the Queensland Police Service assigns to people whose details it records in its QPRIME database.

Every person recorded in QPRIME receives a single person identifier number, regardless of whether they are an offender, victim, witness, or missing person. Once a person is recorded in QPRIME with a single person identifier number, any subsequent record created in QPRIME for that person will include the person's single person identifier number. No one person should have more than one single person identifier number and no two people should have the same single person identifier number. The single person identifier allows police to link all instances of involvement an individual has had with police.

Since October 2008, the single person identifier has been used by police to assist with the transmission of bench charge sheets to courts.

In November 2011, the police began sharing the single person identifier number more broadly with other criminal justice entities. This was intended to enable criminal justice agencies to track offenders as they move through the criminal justice system.

Offenders who are prosecuted by authorities other than the Queensland Police Service, such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Queensland, are not assigned a single person identifier.

2. Recording and reporting criminal justice data

Chapter in brief

Reliable, accurate and accessible data is crucial to an effective and efficient criminal justice system. It allows decision-makers at all levels to make timely, evidence-based decisions.

Main findings

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the Queensland Police Service increasingly recorded data in a timely manner, but the completeness and accuracy of the data declined.

Over this period, 22 per cent of all occurrence reports with reportable offences recorded in the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system were incomplete, inaccurate or both.

A review by Policelink (the Queensland Police Service's telephone reporting service for occurrences) of 2 681 occurrence reports submitted between 3 July and 2 September 2016 found that 12 per cent of reportable offences were incorrectly classified or cleared.

Across the state, the percentage of offences being classified as *unsolved* decreased between 2010–11 and 2015–16. This corresponded to an increase in offences being *withdrawn* or classified as *unfounded* (where there is sufficient evidence to indicate the offence did not occur) by police over this period.

Queensland Police Service classification rules and quality assurance processes are inadequate and in some instances non-existent. Where quality assurance processes are in place, they are not always practised due to staffing levels and the volumes of crime reports received. This leaves the classification and clearing of offences open to error, inconsistent interpretations, and potential manipulation.

The police district we examined in detail (the Gold Coast district) had questionable practices around crimes classified as *withdrawn* and *unfounded*. This is in part because police are trying to achieve crime rate targets. Their practices included approaching victims to withdraw offences, classifying offences as *withdrawn* because victims did not respond to letters, and reclassifying offences as *unfounded* without an appropriate basis.

As a result of our audit, the Queensland Police Service reviewed all *unfounded* and *withdrawn* offences from November 2015. It found a statewide error rate of 9.4 per cent, which ranged from 2.1 per cent in one district to 21 per cent in another.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (through Queensland Corrective Services) has incorrectly reported some of its key external performance measures since 2006, including recidivism (repeat offender) rates and staff to offender ratios. This is because of poor quality assurance practices related to its data extraction scripts.

Introduction

The reliability of criminal justice information and reports is determined by how accurately and completely criminal justice entities collect and record data, whether they do so in a timely way, and how the data is quality assured. We define these terms in the following way:

- accurate—the information recorded represents what actually occurred and is classified correctly, and amendments are monitored and approved

- complete—all information and occurrences that should be recorded are actually recorded

- timely—the information is available when needed to inform decisions and processes. Section 1.11.2 of the Queensland Police Service's operational procedure manual requires a police officer to record an offence in the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system within four hours of receiving a complaint

- quality assured—the data is reviewed and subject to rigorous quality assurance practices.

At times entities may need to manage their tolerance levels around accuracy, completeness, and timeliness depending on the circumstances and urgency surrounding their need for the data. This is more likely for operational rather than statistical needs.

The Queensland Police Service is the main gateway for information entering the criminal justice system. This data often flows from police to prosecutors, courts, and corrective services, with the Queensland Police Service lodging 91 per cent of criminal court matters. Consequently, all other criminal justice entities rely on the police capturing and sharing accurate, complete, and timely data. There is also considerable public and political focus on crime statistics.

A police officer's decision on the recording of crime reports relies on the officer's individual judgement on whether a crime has occurred. This can change as the investigation progresses, further information becomes available, and the outcome of the investigation is known. For this reason, there are circumstances where it is necessary and appropriate for offences to be re-classified as *unfounded*, *cancelled*, *solved*, or *withdrawn*. Getting the classification right is important because it can affect crime statistics.

As shown in figure 2A, two of the indicators the Queensland Police Service publicly report are the rate of crime and the rate of offences cleared.

Figure 2A
Queensland Police Service's reported indicators
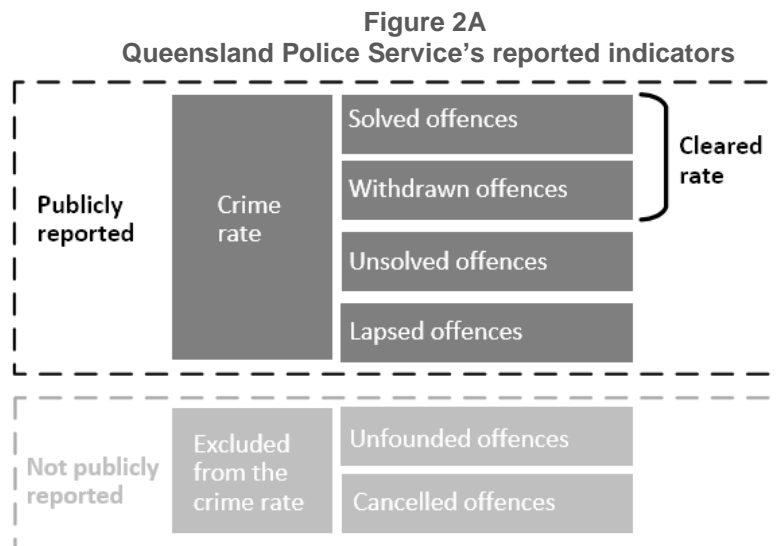
Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Under-reporting the crime rate and inflating the clearance rate can, combined, have a significant effect on the perception of crime and the effectiveness of police. The following categories are high risk for data error or manipulation:

- *unfounded*—where there is sufficient evidence to indicate the offence did not occur

- *cancelled*—when the offence should never have been recorded, such as an offence occurring overseas or interstate, or where the matter is no longer being dealt with by Queensland Police Service, such as matters referred to the Australian Federal Police

- *solved*—when police have identified an offender for the offence and have sufficient evidence to determine the offender committed the offence. There are a number of subcategories that make up the *solved* category, including *solved—offender bar to prosecution* (meaning there is some legal or other factor inhibiting the prosecution of the offender)

- *withdrawn*—when the offence occurred but the victim withdraws the complaint. There are two categories for withdrawals: a victim can formally sign a document withdrawing the complaint (referred to as a 6A withdrawal) or a victim can indicate he or she wishes to withdraw the complaint but not sign a document to this effect (referred to as a 6B withdrawal).

Manipulating or incorrectly recording offences in these categories will inflate the cleared rate.

We expected that these categories would be subject to rigorous monitoring and quality assurance practices by the Queensland Police Service due to the risk for error and manipulation.

The government relies on this data to inform criminal justice and social policy decisions, and the public relies on it as an indicator of safety and security.

For these reasons, this chapter focuses on the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of the Queensland Police Service's crime data and its reporting of this data. We also examine the accuracy of Queensland Corrective Services' data reporting.

Audit conclusions

The numerous weaknesses in the Queensland Police Service's data entry and quality assurance processes raise concerns about the quality, completeness, and accuracy of the underlying data in its main system, QPRIME. Collectively, these issues mean that the government and public should be cautious in relying on reported criminal justice data as an accurate representation of crime and justice in Queensland.

The Queensland Police Service has improved the timeliness of its data entry but not its completeness and accuracy. Poor data recording, classification, and quality assurance processes and practices have contributed to the decline in the quality and completeness of data between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Staff responsible for recording and reviewing offences include operational officers, crime managers (managers in each police district responsible for issuing investigation tasks and data quality), senior police, and statistical services staff. Because these staff have differing levels of understanding and guidance, they are interpreting offence classification rules and the national crime recording standard differently. As a result, the data is inaccurate, wrongly classified, and inconsistent across districts and divisions.

These issues are exacerbated by the Queensland Police Service's operational teams having different opinions on crime reporting requirements to those of the Statistical Services unit within the Public Safety Business Agency. (The Statistical Services unit is responsible for reporting Queensland Police Service statistics).

We examined the Gold Coast police district in detail for this audit. This district's governance over the quality and accuracy of crime data is poor, with inappropriate practices and attitudes towards changes to data occurring across the district.

The introduction of targets linked to what police refer to as 'aspirational goals' has had the perverse effect of introducing an incentive to manipulate crime data to meet targets, including using task force police to review and withdraw unsolved crimes or classify them as *unfounded*. The perception of some police in the district is that those charged with governance within the district are prioritising the meeting of the aspirational goals over ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data.

The inappropriate practices considerably erode confidence in reported crime data in this district and consequently on the state-reported crime data, particularly regarding the clearing of offences. While we did not conduct in-depth investigation of other districts, our analysis indicates some issues are likely to be more widespread. This led to a Queensland Police Service review of *withdrawn* and *unfounded* offences. The findings of this review (a statewide error rate of 9.4 per cent, with one district error rate as high as 21 per cent) support the need to proactively monitor and manage these and other risks to crime data.

The Queensland Police Service is not alone. Inaccurate reporting of key publicly-reported corrective services data has occurred for a number of years, in one case going as far back as 2006. This demonstrates a fundamental and systemic breakdown in data extraction and quality assurance practices. The incorrect figures have been relied on as indicators of the effectiveness and efficiency of corrective services and the justice system and used as the basis for decision-making.

Timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of data

Timely recording of police data is important, particularly when the data will be used to provide information to inform police operations and criminal justice policy. Timeliness can be somewhat less important for data used solely for statistical reporting, but the timeliness of data capture and recording can also impact on the completeness and accuracy of data.

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the Queensland Police Service increasingly recorded data in a timely manner, but the completeness and accuracy of the data declined.

Timely recording of occurrence reports

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, police officers and staff recorded 2 174 144 occurrences in QPRIME for reportable offences. As shown in Figure 2B, 82 per cent (1 789 740) of occurrence reports were entered into QPRIME on time (within four hours) and 16 per cent (337 643) were entered late (more than four hours). Two per cent (46 761) of occurrences were recorded as having been entered into QPRIME before the date the offence was reported to police.

Figure 2B
Timeliness of entering reports—2010–11 to 2015–16

Timeliness	Percentage (%)	Number
On time (within four hours)	82	1 789 740
Late (more than four hours)	16	337 643
Entered before reported (error)	2	46 761

Note: Section 1.11.2 of the Queensland Police Service's operational procedure manual requires a police officer to record an offence in QPRIME within four hours of receiving a complaint.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Figure 2C shows that timeliness improved from 2010–11 to 2015–16.

Figure 2C
Trend in timeliness of reports—2010–11 to 2015–16
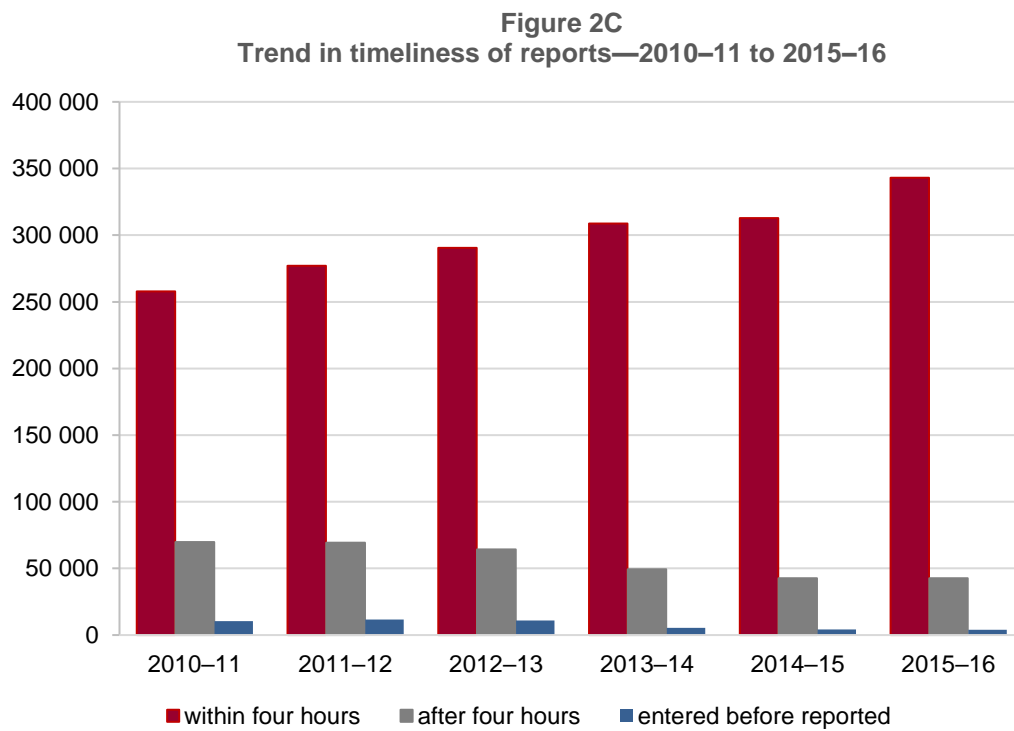
Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data.

Figure 2D shows the number of days occurrence reports have been entered late into QPRIME between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Figure 2D
Occurrence reports recorded in QPRIME late—2010–11 to 2015–16
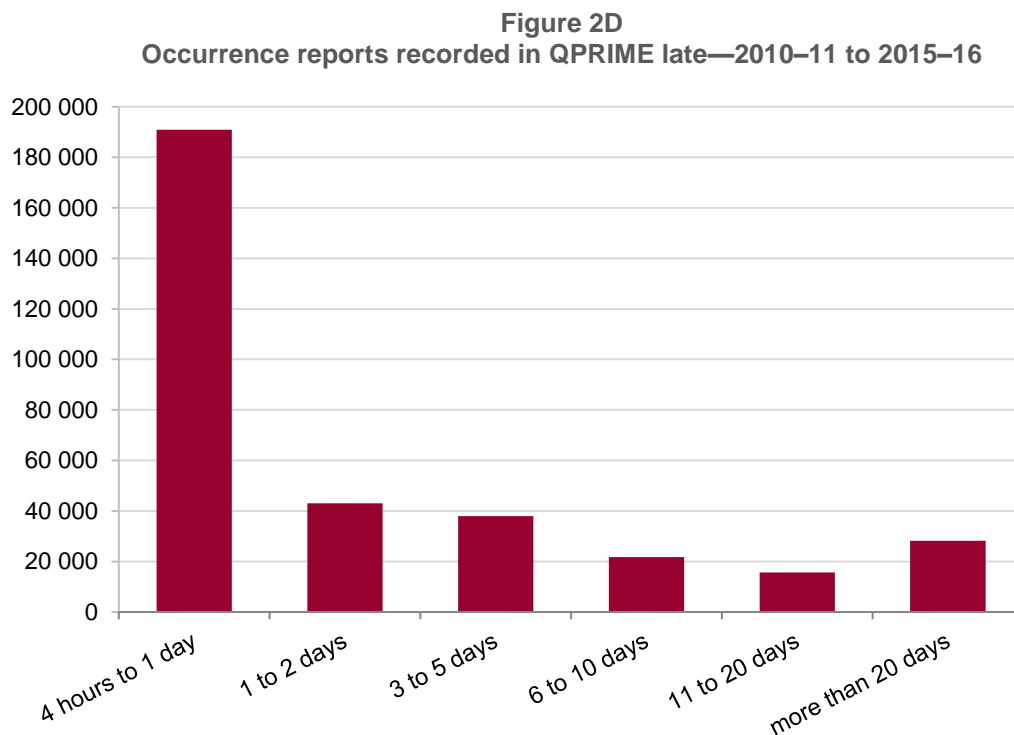
Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Most of the 337 643 late occurrence reports were only hours late. However, eight per cent (28 216) were entered 20 days or more after the complaint was made. Apart from the data recording and statistical reporting implications of police entering these reports so late, the delays have the potential to hinder investigations and other processes, such as insurance claims. Only once a new occurrence is recorded in QPRIME will a crime manager assign it to a police station for investigation.

Reports more than 20 days late ranged from 20 days to five years late. The number of reports 20 days late or more as a percentage of total reports increased noticeably from 2010–11 (1.06 per cent) to 2011–12 (1.55 per cent), but has since reduced to 1.15 in 2015–16. The Public Safety Business Agency advised us that some of the larger delays were a result of data entry errors and system outages, but were unable to confirm how many.

The 28 216 reports entered more than 20 days late were predominantly for less serious offences, such as graffiti (4 271) and fraud (3 961). However, occurrence reports were also entered late into QPRIME for more serious offences. Figure 2E captures the number of occurrence reports entered into QPRIME more than 20 days late for four of the more serious offence groups.

Figure 2E
Types of occurrence reports entered late—2010–11 to 2015–16

Offence description	Number entered late
Assault (common, occasioning bodily harm, and serious other)	1 668
Rape	436
Sexual assault (other)	50
Homicide (murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to murder, and driving causing death)	4

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data.

Improving the timeliness of data entered into QPRIME is only beneficial if data quality is maintained or (preferably) improved. This is not the case for the Queensland Police Service.

Accuracy and completeness of occurrence reports

The accuracy and completeness of occurrence reports is not improving.

Figure 2F shows that between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the percentage of occurrence reports for reportable offences entered late into QPRIME decreased. During the same period, the percentage of occurrence reports for reportable offences with an error (incomplete and/or inaccurate data) rose slightly.

Figure 2F
Percentage of occurrence reports entered late against those with an error—2010–11 to 2015–16
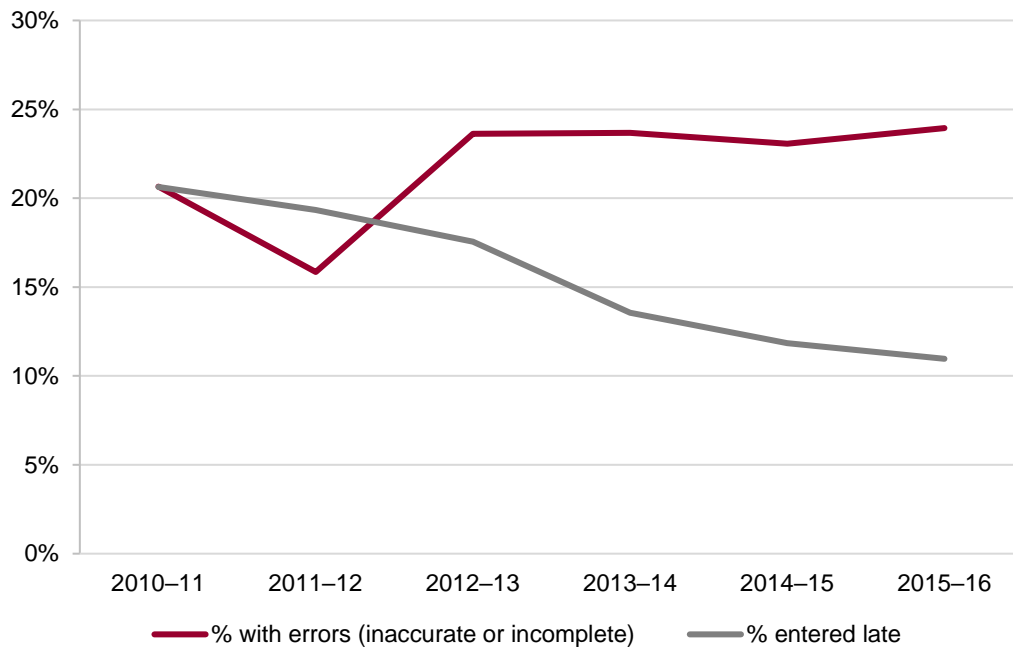
Note: The data used to calculate the percentage of occurrence reports with errors was extracted from QPRIME on 19 January 2017 and is point-in-time data. Therefore, occurrence reports amended prior to 19 January 2017 are not captured in this data set.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data.

As at 19 January 2017, 22 per cent (475 161) of occurrence reports for reportable offences recorded in QPRIME between 2010–11 and 2015–16 had an error. Of these 475 161 reports:

- 69.4 per cent (329 676) were incomplete
- 28.6 per cent (136 029) were inaccurate
- two per cent (9 456) were both incomplete and inaccurate.

We categorised occurrence reports as incomplete and inaccurate based on the business rules in the QPRIME user guide. The business rules we used are designed to identify occurrence reports that are missing specific pieces of information that should have been recorded. For example, the report may identify that there is an offender linked to an incident, but some of their details are not recorded, such as gender or date of birth.

Of the occurrence reports that were incomplete, common information missing included:

- offender details not recorded (59 300 occurrences—18 per cent). These are reports that have an offender linked to the report but the offender details are not recorded
- action officer and/or action station not linked (22 864 occurrences—6.9 per cent).

Of the occurrence reports that were inaccurate, common errors included:

- *modus operandi* (method of operation) incorrectly recorded (18 915 occurrences—13.9 per cent)
- suspect has no wanted for questioning flag (16 123—11.9 per cent)
- domestic violence breach incorrectly recorded (15 971 occurrences—11.7 per cent).

Assuring the quality of data entered into QPRIME

The two areas of the Queensland Police Service responsible for providing independent quality assurance over police data are:

- Policelink (the Queensland Police Service's telephone reporting service for occurrences)

- crime managers within each police district.

This is independent assurance in addition to quality assurance practices undertaken by police station staff.

The Statistical Services unit (of the Public Safety Business Agency) does not have a formal quality assurance role, but it provides some limited checking.

Despite this quality assurance being provided, data is still being incorrectly classified and changes are being made without appropriate validation. This is because these areas do not have the capacity to quality review the volume of data entered into QPRIME. It is also because the rules are vague around classifying and finalising offences, leaving data entry open to interpretation and manipulation.

Policelink

Non-life-threatening incidents are reported to the Queensland Police Service's Policelink telephone reporting service or to a police station. The Queensland Police Service introduced Policelink in 2010 as the primary contact point for the public requiring police assistance in non-emergency matters, or wishing to report a non-urgent incident. Police officers also report incidents to Policelink over the phone.

Policelink has a dedicated quality assurance team (seven quality assurance managers). However, because of the volume of crime reports and its small staff numbers, it performs a very limited quality assurance function, conducting only targeted reviews or responding to specific requests.

The diminishing reliability of occurrence reports coincides with December 2012 changes made to processes for the Policelink Intranet Reporting application. This enabled police officers to enter some occurrences directly into QPRIME rather than phoning a Policelink operator who would enter the report on the officer's behalf. The effect of this was that the number of people entering data into QPRIME substantially increased—from 300 Policelink operators to approximately 10 000 police officers.

While this has potential operational benefits such as timely data entry, it also increases the challenges for maintaining assurance over the quality of data. Instead of managing inputs from a small number of Policelink staff, the Queensland Police Service now needs to provide assurance over data entered by many more police.

The Queensland Police Service has not increased its quality assurance processes in line with the increased risks to data quality brought about by these changes. As a result, it has limited controls in place to check the accuracy and completeness of occurrence reports entered into QPRIME.

In addition, Policelink operators have very limited input into validation of reports that police officers submit directly through the Police Intranet Reporting application. Therefore, in the majority of cases, no assessment occurs of the completeness, accuracy, or classification of these reports. This includes cases where a police officer submits a supplementary report to modify or change the original occurrence report, including changing it to *solved*, *unfounded*, *withdrawn*, or *cancelled*.

Where Policelink operators do validate reports, they do so by searching for key words rather than assessing whether the investigative information included in the report is sufficient or adequate to support the report classification. This means there is insufficient overview or validation when offences are changed to *withdrawn*, *unfounded*, or *solved—offender bar to prosecution.*

During this audit, Policelink's quality assurance team undertook a two-week random audit of occurrence reports submitted through the Policelink Intranet Reporting application between 3 July and 2 September 2016. The audit reviewed 2 681 occurrence reports to determine if the reported offences were correctly classified and counted and the reports had been appropriately finalised. The audit found that 12 per cent (322) of the 2 681 occurrence reports submitted were incorrect:

- seven per cent (184) incorrectly recorded the offence classification

- five per cent (132) incorrectly recorded the number of offences

- 0.2 per cent (6) were incorrectly finalised.

Crime managers

The crime managers in each district are the conduit between the police stations and units within their district and Policelink and the Statistical Services unit. They have a key role in monitoring the quality of occurrence reports in their district. Their position description details that one of their accountabilities is to:

> Monitor the quality of crime investigations and the information contained in relevant reports and advise the Officers in Charge or the officer concerned of any deficiencies.

If a crime manager identifies a discrepancy in an occurrence report, they can submit a data quality task to the relevant officer in charge, advising of the error and requesting an amendment to the report.

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, the number of data quality tasks almost doubled from 62 894 to 120 390. There are no monitoring, review, escalation, or assurance processes for the data quality tasks. We obtained evidence of data quality tasks sent by crime managers regarding amendments to occurrence reports that were ignored by the receipting police officers. This resulted in a higher clearance rate being reported.

The crime managers we interviewed demonstrated differing levels of understanding of the classification and finalisation of offences, particularly in regard to classifying offences as *withdrawn* and *unfounded*. This has led to inconsistent practices across police districts. Crime managers do not receive training in the National Crime Recording Standard or the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification.

The Queensland Police Service does not provide clear guidance material to assist officers reporting offences in QPRIME. The existing Policelink and QPRIME manuals are vague and open to interpretation.

Statistical Services Unit

The Public Safety Business Agency's Statistical Services unit (the Statistical Services unit), provides statistical services to the Queensland Police Service. It is responsible for generating statistical information on behalf of the Queensland Police Service.

The Public Safety Business Agency and Queensland Police Service do not have a service level agreement or any other document in place to define the service arrangements between them.

Although the arrangements are not documented, the Queensland Police Service and Public Safety Business agency both told us that the Statistical Services unit is responsible for the extraction and reporting of crime data for the Queensland Police Service. This includes the external reporting of crime data.

The Queensland Police Service does not require the Statistical Services unit to provide quality assurance and has not put alternate arrangements in place. The Statistical Services unit does undertake some limited checking of the data during the extraction process. If it identifies data issues, it reports them to Policelink.

As a result, limited quality assurance is occurring. The Statistical Services unit has a procedure to manage risks associated with releasing information requested by external agencies. But it does not have appropriate and relevant guidelines, policy, and training for reporting, classifying, and managing crime statistics.

The Queensland Police Service and the Statistical Services unit have not clearly documented the categories included and excluded from the reported crime statistics to ensure they consistently report the same data each financial year. For example, when we asked the staff about their reporting of *withdrawn* offences they were unclear whether offences withdrawn because the victim formally withdraws their complaint *(*6A) and because the victim wants no further action (6B) are both counted as cleared offences.

Updating and amending crime reports

Police regularly need to update and amend crime reports with additional information and the outcomes of investigations. This can include changing the status of reports from *unsolved* to another status, such as *solved*, *withdrawn*, or *unfounded*. They do this by submitting supplementary reports. This is another point of risk for crime data error or manipulation.

We expected the Queensland Police Service and the Public Safety Business Agency to:

- provide clear guidance and processes to reduce this risk of error or manipulation

- have a quality assurance process to monitor and review amended reports

- effectively address errors and manipulation when they occur.

The Gold Coast district crime data

The practices and attitudes of the Gold Coast district to crime data leave its staff open to claims of manipulation.

The Gold Coast district leadership has set what they refer to as 'aspirational goals' in order to drive the district's improvement in reducing crime. Each division across the Gold Coast receives a weekly email that sets clearance targets for each offence. Although these goals are described as aspirational, they have created a perceived pressure on staff to meet the clearance targets. This has led to inappropriate practices in the district aimed at:

- reducing the reported crime rate by classifying (and finalising) *unsolved* offences as *unfounded*

- inflating the cleared rate by increasing the number of offences *withdrawn* and classifying offences as *solved* by claiming there is a *bar to prosecution.*

Practices such as these bring into question the reliability of the Queensland Police Service's cleared crime rates and more broadly its crime statistics. These practices have become the norm rather than the exception, with police perceiving pressure from senior leadership to improve their crime and clearance rates. We saw little evidence of senior leaders actively managing practices to ensure data integrity and quality.

Clearing reported offences

When the Queensland Police Service reports the rate of cleared offences, it does not solely mean offences it has *solved*. It counts both *solved* and *withdrawn* offences as cleared offences. Offences classified as *unsolved*, *unfounded*, *cancelled*, or *lapsed* (for example, when the offender can no longer be charged for the offence) are excluded.

An offence *solved* is vastly different from an offence *withdrawn*. In most cases, an offence is *solved* because of the work undertaken by a police officer to investigate the offence, gather evidence, and then prepare and present the evidence before the courts. An offence is *withdrawn* either because the victim:

- formally withdraws their complaint (referred to as a 6A), or

- wants no further action (referred to as a 6B).

Victims who formally withdraw their complaint must do so in writing and sign a withdrawal of complaint form, which states:

> This withdrawal of the complaint is made by my/our own free will and was not solicited or induced by any police officer.

For police to withdraw a complaint under 6B, the following criteria must be met:

> There is sufficient evidence to determine an offence has been committed but an offender will not be charged due to the victim indicating that no further action is desired but has not formally withdrawn the complaint.

The criteria require the victim to indicate they wish to take no further action. Whether a victim indicates they wish the complaint to be withdrawn can be subjective and open to manipulation.

Regardless of whether the victim formally withdraws their complaint (6A) or decides they want to take no further action (6B), the offence is counted as cleared—improving the Queensland Police Service's cleared crime statistics.

We found the number of offences *withdrawn*, and the practices surrounding how offences are *withdrawn*, varied significantly across the state and the Gold Coast district.

### Offences solved and withdrawn

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, 2 809 283 offences were reported across Queensland. The Queensland Police Service cleared 63.5 per cent (1 785 102) of the reported offences. Of these, 58.7 per cent (1 649 506) were *solved* and 4.8 per cent (135 596) were *withdrawn*. The state average of offences *withdrawn* increased from four per cent to 5.1 per cent between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Between 2010–11 and 2015–16, 332 070 offences were reported across the Gold Coast district. The Gold Coast district cleared 56.9 per cent (188 846) of the reported offences, of which 51.4 per cent (170 616) were *solved* and 5.5 per cent (18 230) were *withdrawn*.

The Gold Coast district had the lowest *solved* rate between 2010–11 and 2015–16 compared with any other Queensland Police Service district. It also had the highest number of offences *withdrawn*. Although the Gold Coast district didn't have the highest percentage of offences *withdrawn* over that period, its percentage increased from 3.1 per cent to 6.6 per cent and is currently 1.8 percentage points higher than the state average of 4.8 per cent.

Figure 2G captures the percentage of offences *withdrawn* between 2010–11 and 2015–16 for the Gold Coast district compared with the state average.

Figure 2G
Percentage of offences withdrawn for the Gold Coast district compared to the state average between 2010–11 and 2015–16
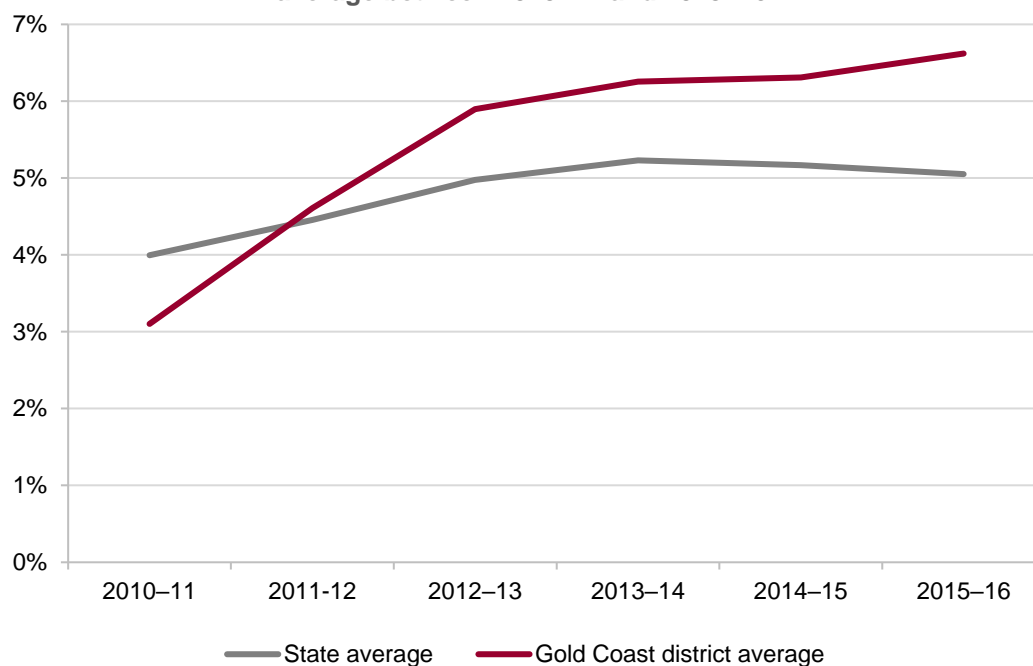
Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

The percentage of offences *withdrawn* across the Gold Coast district is increasing at a significant rate. Coomera division had the greatest increase in offences *withdrawn*, from 3.3 per cent (230) in 2010–11 to nine per cent (900) in 2015–16. This is an increase of 291 per cent, which is not commensurate with the increase in reported offences from 7 051 in 2010–11 to 9 989 in 2015–16.

All Gold Coast divisions had a greater percentage increase in the number of offences *withdrawn* compared to the state average. Figure 2H displays the percentage of offences *withdrawn* across Gold Coast divisions compared to the state average between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Figure 2H
Gold Coast divisions' percentages of offences withdrawn between 2010–11 and 2015–16
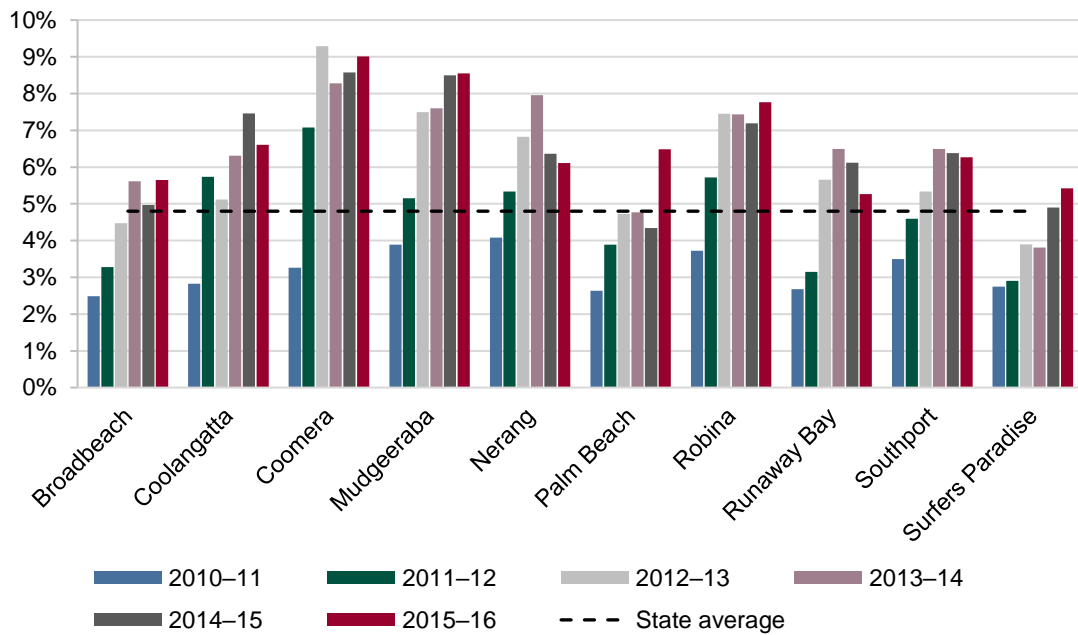
Note: The line displays the state average of 4.8 per cent of offences *withdrawn* between 2010–11 and 2015–16. Across the state, the percentage of offences *withdrawn* increased from four per cent to 5.1 per cent between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Practices leading to offences being withdrawn

The sharp increase in offences being classified as *withdrawn* across the Gold Coast district is not attributable to more victims uniformly deciding to withdraw their complaints. Rather, specific Gold Coast divisions have employed methods aimed at encouraging victims to withdraw their complaint as a means to increase the clearance rate, including:

▪ soliciting victims to withdraw complaints that would have otherwise been categorised as *unsolved—pending further information*

▪ sending victims letters requiring them to respond within seven days or police will 'presume' the victim wants no further action and will withdraw the complaint (6B)

▪ adopting a three strikes policy, where if they cannot contact victims after three attempts, they classify the complaint as *withdrawn*.

Despite the withdrawal of complaint form specifically stating that a victim's withdrawal of complaint must not be 'solicited or induced by any police officer', we obtained evidence that demonstrates some divisions within the Gold Coast district are inducing or leading victims to withdraw their complaint.

This includes police officers meeting with victims to advise them that the police have exhausted their investigation and to solicit a withdrawal from the victim. One officer even recorded in QPRIME that they sought an assault victim's withdrawal in line with the police station's aspirational goals. In these cases, the appropriate status of the report should have been *unsolved—pending further information* rather than *withdrawn*.

Appendix E includes a copy of a letter sent by a police officer to a victim of crime. It stipulates that the victim had seven days to contact police or their complaint would be withdrawn and no further investigation would occur. In this specific example, the victim had only reported the complaint two and half weeks prior to the police sending the letter. It read:

> If police have not been contacted by you by … it will be presumed that this lack of contact indicates a desire on your part to no longer proceed with this matter and the matter will be withdrawn and no further investigation will occur. The matter will be finalised within the police computer system as such.

Although it may be appropriate for a police officer to initiate contact with a victim about their complaint, it is unreasonable to presume that a lack of contact by the victim indicates that they would like their complaint to be withdrawn.

These practices of withdrawing offences in the Gold Coast district are longstanding. In November 2013, the Statistical Services unit advised the Gold Coast district that the use of these type of letters by the Coomera division to *withdraw* offences was inappropriate, conflicted with reporting and recording procedures, and was to stop. These practices were continued and were still in place in June 2014, when they were again raised in a report. There is no record of whether police changed the status of these offences back to *unsolved*.

Another example relates to 23 burglary-related offences that were classified as *withdrawn* by Southport division. These offences were *withdrawn* after task force police contacted victims. They used a standard template to update QPRIME, recording that the victim '… wants no further action and only reported the matter to police for information and intelligence'. Policelink reviewed and agreed with the withdrawal of these offences based on the key words that the 'victim wants no further action' (6B withdrawal).

It is improbable that 23 victims would make this statement of their own volition without police soliciting the withdrawal. The result was the offences were counted as cleared, when in reality they were *unsolved*.

Other offences where police have solicited withdrawals include assaults and theft.

Solving offences—offender bar to prosecution

The Queensland Police Service counts *solved* offences in its reported cleared rate. An offence can be solved in a variety of different ways. If there is sufficient evidence to determine an offender committed an offence but there is something barring their prosecution, then the crime can be classified as *solved—offender bar to prosecution*.

There is a lack of clear guidance around solving offences in this way, which means this status for solving offences is inconsistently and subjectively used and open to confusion and misuse. The Policelink manual gives an example about an aggrieved person in a domestic violence matter who refuses to cooperate with police and supply a statement. Having a victim who refuses to cooperate and supply a statement is not sufficient grounds to classify an offence as *solved—offender bar to prosecution*. Not only is the example vague, but it is inconsistent with the national crime recording standard. The standard makes no mention about victims refusing to cooperate. It states that a police investigation can be finalised as 'unable to proceed' where:

> … one or more alleged offenders have been identified but no action is able to be taken due to one of the following circumstances: diplomatic immunity; incompetence of the alleged offender(s); death of the alleged offender; imprisonment; or age of the offender.

As such, there is a level of confusion amongst police officers regarding what can be classified as *solved—offender bar to prosecution*.

Police officers from the Surfers Paradise division classified an assault offence as *solved—offender bar to prosecution* because there was insufficient available and admissible evidence to prove the charge against the defendant. Instead of the offence remaining as *unsolved—pending further information*, it was finalised as *solved*, inflating the Queensland Police Service's clearance rate.

Although the overall number of offences classified as *solved—offender bar to prosecution* across the Gold Coast district is low, there has been a sharp increase at the Broadbeach, Nerang, Southport, and Surfers Paradise divisions. Figure 2I displays the number of offences classified as *solved—offender bar to prosecution* for these divisions between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Figure 2I
Number of offences classified as solved—offender bar to prosecution between 2010–11 and 2015–16
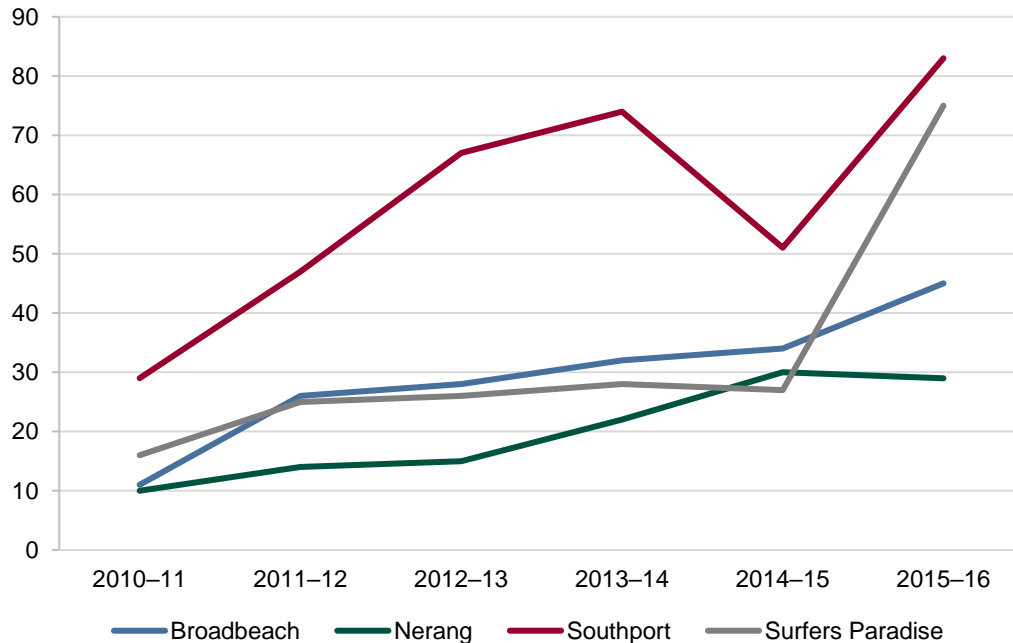
Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Finalising offences as unfounded

If an investigating police officer concludes that an offence has not occurred, they are required to submit a supplementary report to Policelink to classify it as *unfounded*. An offence can be *unfound*ed on any of the following grounds:

- *there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the offence did not occur (7A)*

- *investigations reveal that it is highly doubtful that the offence occurred (7B)*

- *an assault incident was the result of a provocation (7C)*

- *the matter is deemed to be civil rather than criminal in nature (7D).*

Offences classified as *unfounded* reduce the reported rate of crime and therefore lower the reported rate of crime that needs to be cleared.

Of the 2 809 283 offences reported across Queensland between 2010–11 and 2015–16, 4.9 per cent (138 651) were classified as *unfounded*. The Gold Coast district classified four per cent of offences as *unfounded* between 2010–11 and 2015–16. The Gold Coast district has the second lowest percentage of offences classified as *unfounded* in comparison with the other Queensland Police Service districts.

Figure 2J displays the number of offences classified as *unfounded* across the state between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Figure 2J
Number of offences classified as unfounded across the state between 2010–11 and 2015–16
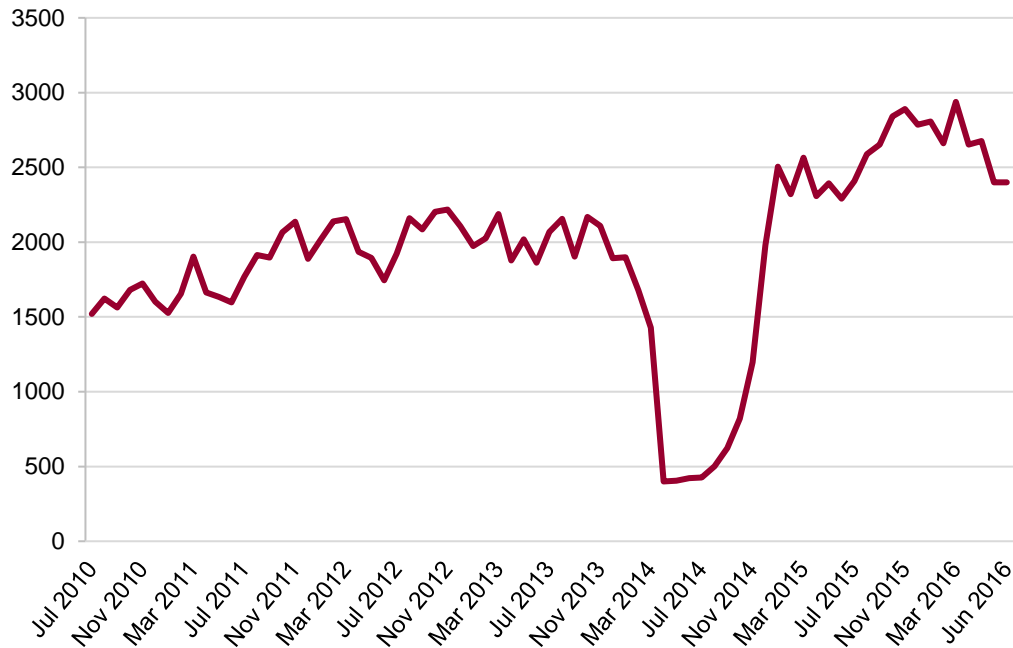
Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

The significant drop in offences classified as *unfounded* from January 2014 and the sharp increase that occurred thereafter was the result of the Queensland Police Service disabling system components in QPRIME overnight for system modifications. After completing the modifications, the Public Safety Business Agency's Frontline and Digital Services unit (responsible for the QPRIME modifications), to re-enable the system's components. They were re-enabled around November 2014 after the error was discovered.

As a result, it does not know the number or details of offences *unfounded* during this period. This has affected the reported crime rate.

Figure 2K displays the rate of offences classified as *unfounded* in the Gold Coast district compared to the state average between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Figure 2K
Percentage of offences classified as unfounded for the Gold Coast district compared to the state average between 2010–11 and 2015–16
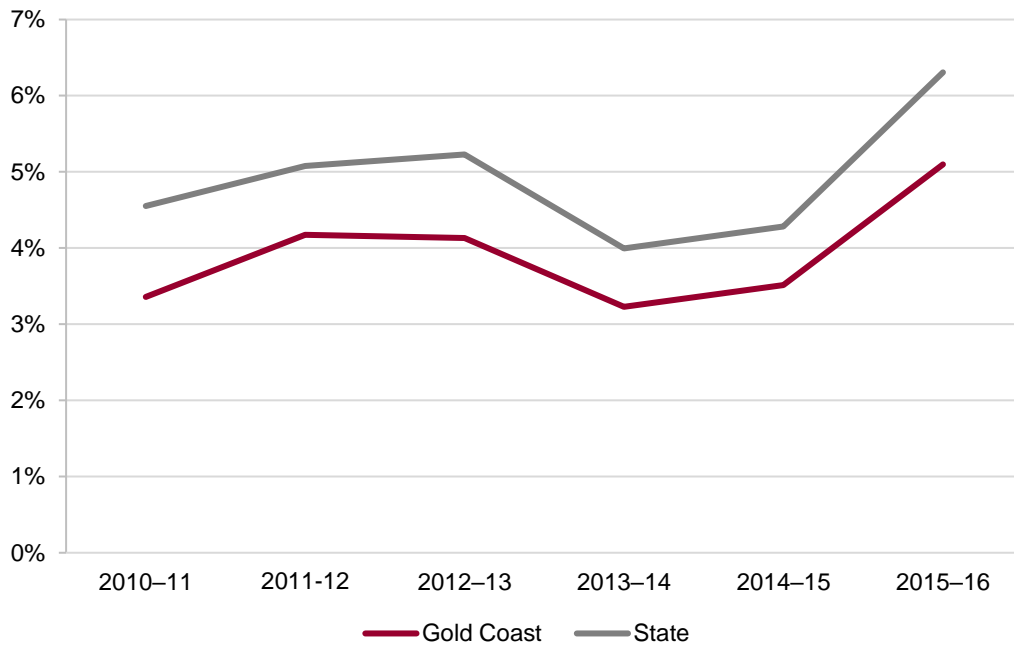
Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Although the Gold Coast district has a lower rate of offences being classified as *unfounded* compared to the state, we identified practices of classifying offences as *unfounded* that are not in accordance with the national counting rules or Queensland Police Service definitions of *unfounded*. This resulted in these offences being incorrectly changed from *unsolved* to *unfounded* and meant they were excluded from the reported crime rate and the *unsolved* crime rate.

For example, Gold Coast police attempted to change the status of an *unsolved* domestic violence offence to *solved—offender bar to prosecution* because there was insufficient evidence to solve the matter. A relieving officer in charge subsequently changed the status to *unfounded*, contrary to assessments from crime managers, a sergeant, and the substantive officer in charge, who all agreed the appropriate status was *unsolved—pending further information*.

Case study 1 details another example of some Gold Coast divisions incorrectly classifying offences as *unfounded*.

Case study 1

Classifying offences as unfounded

In May 2016, a Gold Coast district investigative group reviewed several Gold Coast divisions with higher rates of *unsolved* break and enter offences.

The investigative group determined there was sufficient evidence to conclude 18 break and enter offences did not occur or at least that it was highly doubtful that the offences occurred. The investigative group submitted supplementary reports and Policelink's client service operators classified all 18 offences as *unfounded*. This reduced the reported rate of crime and the *unsolved* rate.

An officer in charge of one of the divisions, along with the district crime manager, disagreed with the assessment and contacted Policelink to discuss the offences.

Policelink's quality assurance team reviewed the offences and subsequently changed 15 of the 18 offences back *to unsolved—pending further information*. Policelink noted that in some cases it appeared the offence had not been investigated and therefore could not be classified as *unfounded*. In other cases, there was sufficient evidence to determine that the offence did occur and it was therefore inappropriate to classify the offence as *unfounded*.

Statewide crime data

Our analysis of statewide crime statistics indicates that the inappropriate practices and attitudes identified on the Gold Coast regarding changes to crime data are unlikely to be isolated to that district.

Figure 2L captures the percentage of offences classified as *withdrawn* across Queensland Police Service districts between 2010–11 and 2015–16. As noted in Figure 2G, statewide, the number of offences classified as *withdrawn* has increased over the last six years. Figure 2L shows a number of districts, like the Gold Coast, have percentages well above the average.

Figure 2L
Percentage of offences classified as withdrawn across districts between 2010–11 and 2015–16
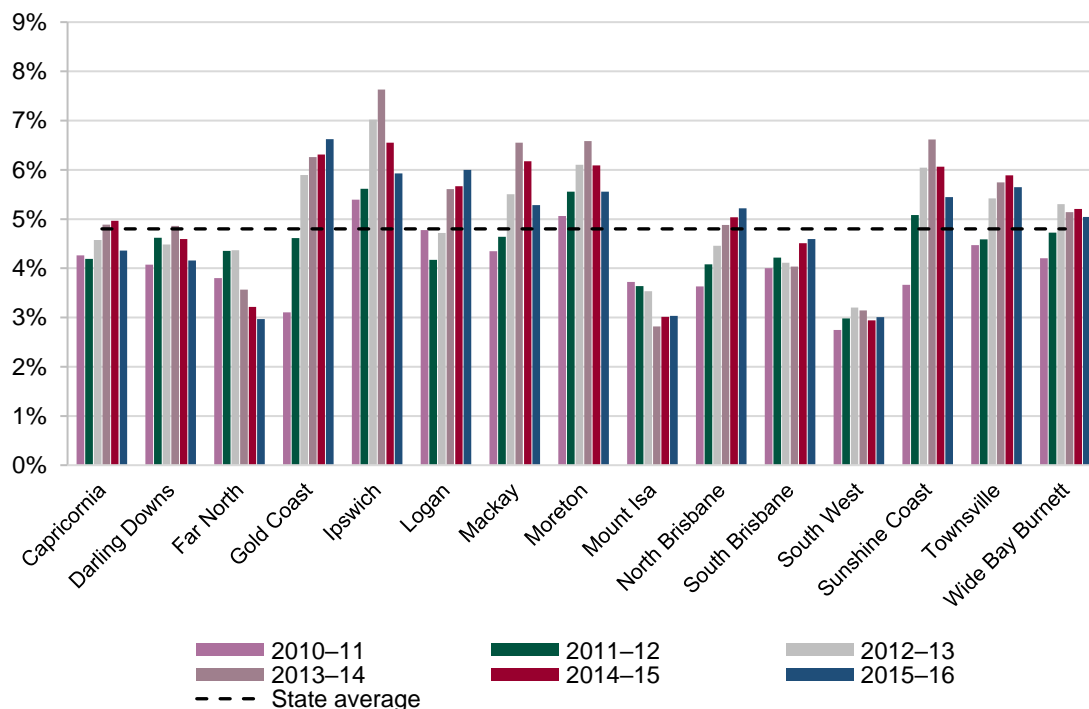
Note: The line displays the state average of 4.8 per cent of offences *withdrawn* between 2010–11 and 2015–16. The percentage of offences classified as *withdrawn* across the state increased from four per cent in 2010–11 to 5.1 per cent in 2015–16.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Figure 2M shows the percentage of offences classified as *unfounded* across Queensland Police Service districts between 2010–11 and 2015–16.

Figure 2M
Percentage of offences classified as unfounded across districts between 2010–11 and 2015–16

Note: The line displays the state average of 4.9 per cent of offences *unfounded* between 2010–11 and 2015–16. The percenta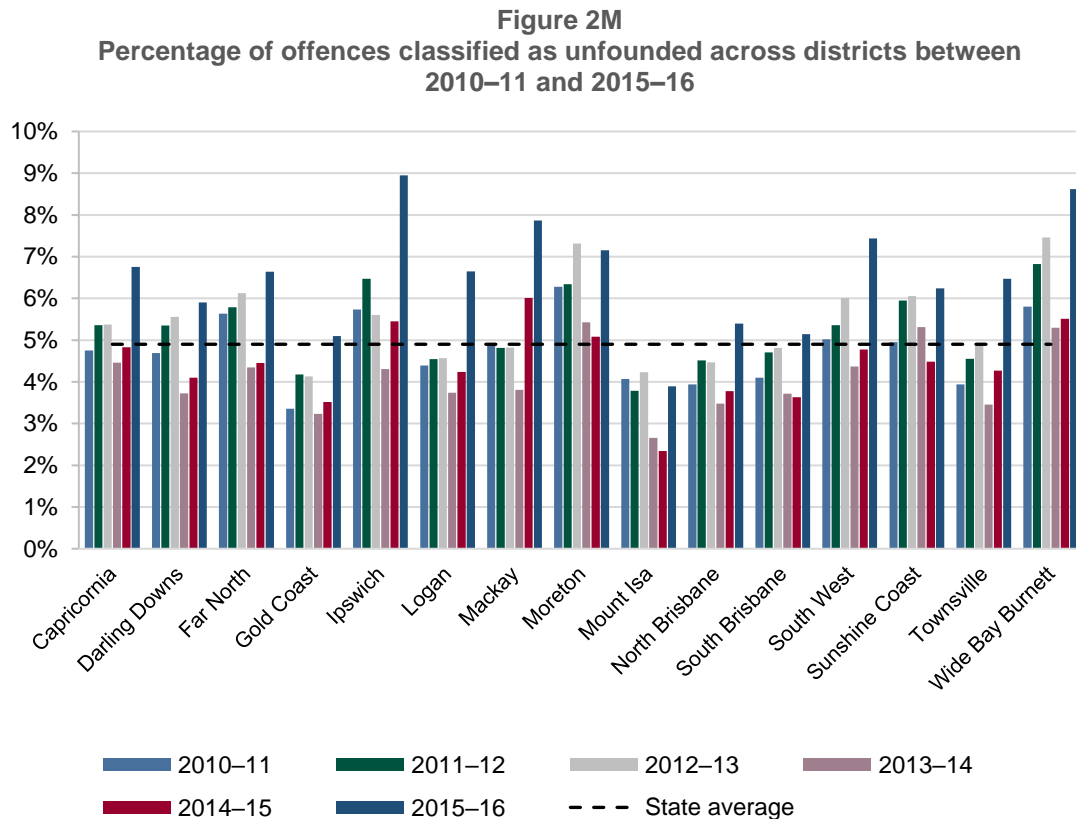ge of offences classified as *unfounded* across the state increased from 4.6 per cent in 2010–11 to 6.3 per cent in 2015–16.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the QPRIME system.

Figures 2L and 2M show that other districts exhibit more noticeable trends than the Gold Coast for offences classified as *withdrawn* and *unfounded*. Most noticeable is the large increase in offences classified as *unfounded* in 2015–16 for all districts. The Queensland Police Service was not aware of this increase.

As a result of this audit, the Queensland Police Service conducted a statewide investigation and found that the increase appears to be linked to the November 2015 expansion of Police Intranet Reporting. This expansion enabled officers to submit all supplementary reports (including classifying offences as *solved*, *unfounded*, and *withdrawn*, and re-classifying offences) via Police Intranet Reporting and effectively bypass previous quality controls, including overview and validation from Policelink quality assurance staff.

The Queensland Police Service acknowledged the potential impact this has had on crime statistics. Its investigation found a statewide error rate of 9.4 per cent in classifying offences as *withdrawn* or *unfounded*, ranging from 2.1 per cent in the Moreton district to 21 per cent in the Logan district. Seven of the 15 districts had error rates higher than the state average, as shown in Figure 2N.

Figure 2N
Error rate across Queensland Police Service districts in classifying offences
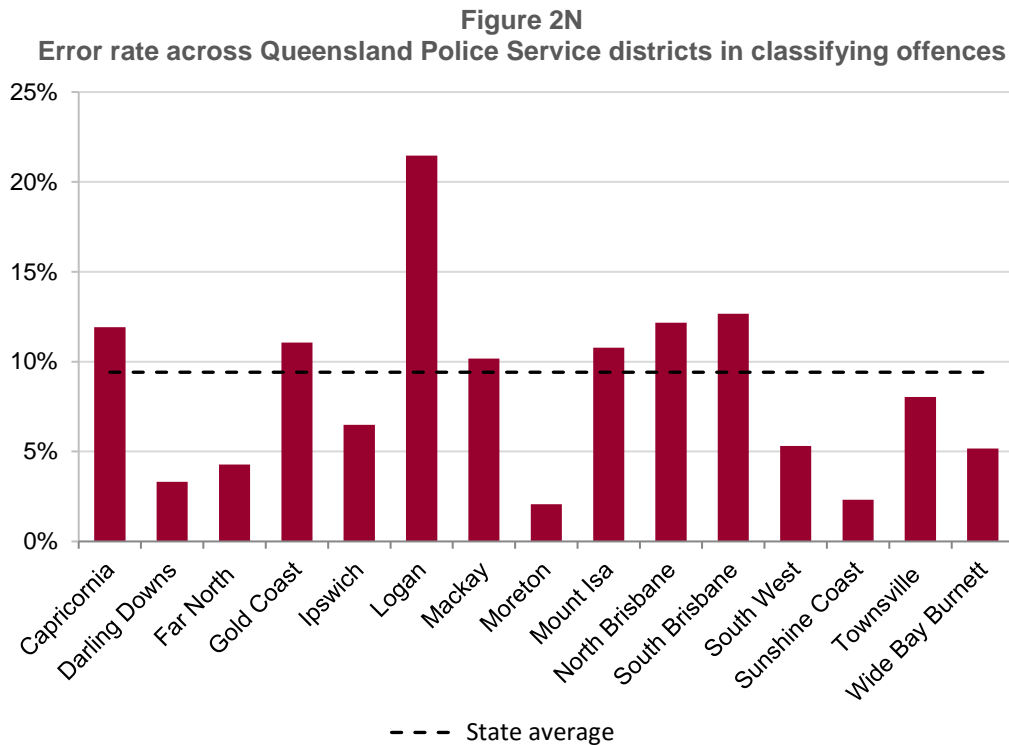
Note: The line displays the statewide error rate of 9.4 per cent.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using data from the Queensland Police Service.

Reporting corrective services data

In 2013, we conducted an audit to follow up on Queensland Corrective Services' progress in implementing the recommendations of our earlier audit (on management of offenders subject to supervision in the community). On 14 October 2015, the Queensland Parliament's Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (the committee) conducted a public briefing on our follow-up report.

During the course of the public briefing, the committee became aware of anomalies in the data reported by Queensland Corrective Services to the Australian Government about offenders returning to corrective services.

The chair of the committee subsequently wrote to the auditor-general requesting investigation of the Queensland Corrective Services data. The auditor-general decided to investigate the data reporting anomalies during this audit. During the course of the audit, the Commissioner of Queensland Corrective Services advised the auditor-general of errors in its reporting of offender to staff ratios.

We examined discrepancies with the return to corrective services and offender to staff ratio data that Queensland Corrective Services reported to the Australian Government for its Report on Government Services.

Rate of prisoners and offenders returning to corrective services

Measuring and reporting on the rate of prisoners and offenders (those who serve their sentence in the community) returning to corrective services within two years of being released or discharged is a means of assessing reoffending rates. It is a criminal justice sector effectiveness measure, meaning it assesses the effectiveness of the system (multiple criminal justice entities contribute) rather than of the performance of one specific entity. Queensland Corrective Services publicly reports on this measure using data extracted from its Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS) database.

Nationally, this measure is viewed as a partial indicator of government's success in meeting its objective to improve public safety by reducing the incidence of crime.

Queensland Corrective Services also publicly reports on the percentage of prisoners returning to corrective services as an effectiveness measure in its service delivery statement.

It reported incorrect data on the rate of prisoners and offenders returning to corrective services for about ten years.

Figure 2O shows that Queensland Corrective Services consistently under-reported the rate of prisoners returning over this period.

Figure 2O
Prisoners returned to corrective services
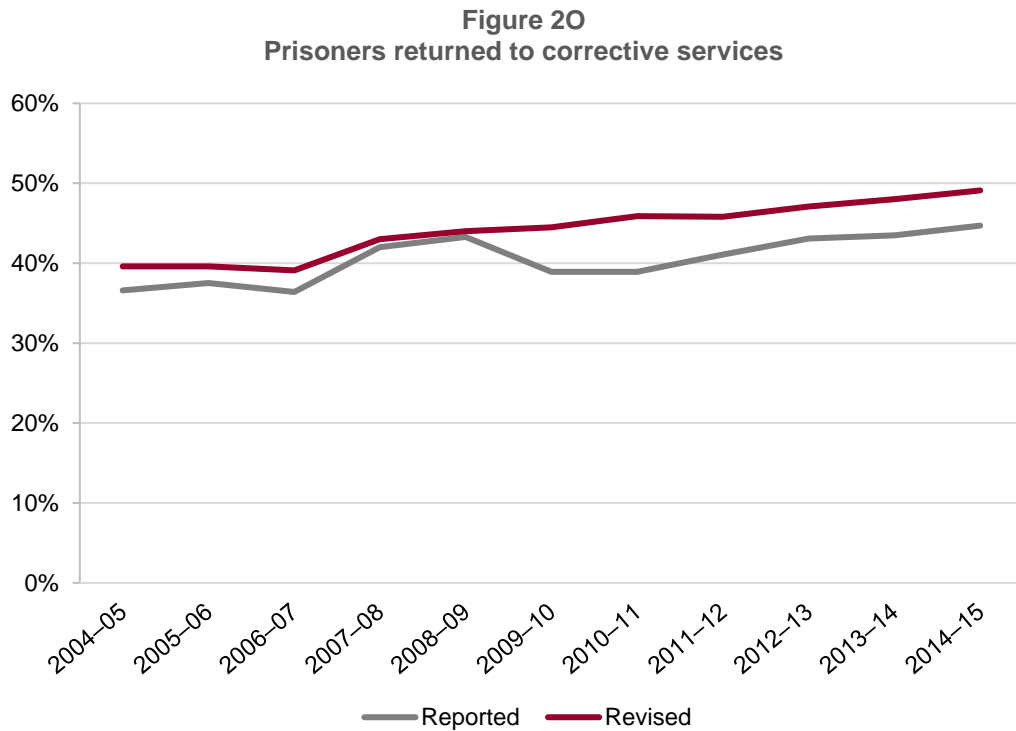
Source: Queensland Audit Office using IOMS data and Report on Government Services data.

Figure 2P shows that Queensland Corrective Services over-reported the rate of offenders returning to corrective services for this ten-year period.

Figure 2P
Offenders returned to corrective services
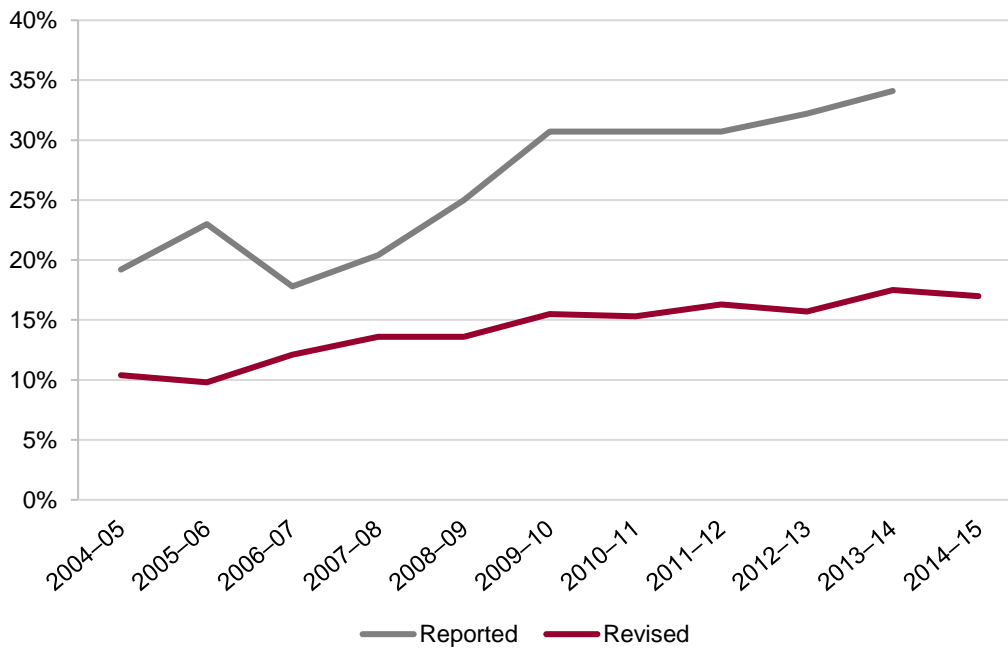
Note: The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Queensland Corrective Services) did not report on offenders returned to corrective services for 2014–15.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using IOMS data and Report on Government Services data.

These errors can affect assessments of the effectiveness of community corrections (offenders) and prisons.

The errors were the result of Queensland Corrective Services failing to review and update its data extraction scripts (the internal program instructions which control how data is extracted) for reporting on these performance measures. Over time, changes in legislation, processes, and data recording meant that some of the data extracted by the script was not relevant. In addition, Queensland Corrective Services' quality assurance processes failed to identify and correct these issues.

Queensland Corrective Services has since revised the scripts. Some of the changes include removing categories of data related to the return to prison of prisoners who were on court-ordered parole. (This is because court-ordered parole is only applicable in Queensland.) Removing these categories is technically consistent with the counting rules, since the offenders were not discharged from prison, instead being released directly from court and supervised by corrective services in the community. They were therefore never in prison. They are still counted in the offenders returned to corrective services reporting.

Queensland Corrective Services has excluded from its reoffending count those offenders who returned within 21 days of their discharge. This is based on an assumption that the offending must have occurred prior to the offender being discharged. This has the potential to understate the reoffending rate for this category of offenders, although the numbers are small.

Offender to staff ratio

Queensland Corrective Services also incorrectly reported on its offender to staff ratios. This is broken into three categories:

- offender to all staff
- offender to operational staff
- offender to other staff.

Queensland Corrective Services misattributed non-operational staff to the operational staff category. This is the result of a combination of human error, poor definitions of operational and non-operational staff, and incorrect human resource database records.

Figure 2Q shows a comparison of the figures that Queensland Corrective Services publicly reported for its offender to staff ratios, the corrected figures, and the change between the two.

Figure 2Q
Queensland Corrective Services offender to staff ratios

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Offender to operational staff ratio				
Reported	35.3	34.4	35.1	37.5
Revised	38.3	37.2	37.9	41.6
Change	**+3**	**+2.8**	**+2. 8**	**+4.1**
Offender to other staff ratio				
Reported	79.6	76.9	74.8	86.5
Revised	67.6	65.3	60.2	69.9
Change	**-12**	**-11.6**	**-14.6**	**-16.6**
Offender to all staff ratio				
Reported	24.5	23.8	23.9	26.2
Revised	24.5	23.7	23.2	26.1
Change	**No change**	**-0.1**	**-0.7**	**-0.1**

Source: Queensland Audit Office using Queensland Corrective Services data.

It shows that Queensland Corrective Services reported a lower ratio of offenders per operational staff member than it should have. This means that in reality its operational staff were each managing more offenders than Queensland Corrective Services reported.

Queensland Corrective Services reported a higher ratio of offenders to other (non-operational) staff than it should have. This means that in reality it had more non-operational staff for each offender than it reported.

Its offender to all staff reporting was minimally affected.

3. Sharing criminal justice data

Chapter in brief

Integrating the data of criminal justice entities is necessary to gain a rich understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of the justice system as a whole and the effectiveness of entity activities.

In order to achieve this, government established the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program (the program) in 2002. The program was intended to deliver a system that shared information electronically between criminal justice entities, replacing legacy paper-based document sharing practices.

In this chapter, we examine how effectively and efficiently information and data is now shared between criminal justice entities and whether the program achieved its intended outcomes.

Main findings

The program delivered some process efficiencies but not all it set out to achieve. More importantly, the criminal justice entities did not achieve the stated strategic outcomes of the Integrated Justice Information Strategy. As a result, criminal justice entities:

- have not improved policy development, evaluation and implementation
- cannot demonstrate improved community safety.

The program ran from 2002–03 to 2009–10 and cost approximately $62 million.

Poor governance and siloed approaches resulted in budget overruns and project delays. The partial implementation of six projects and the de-scoping of another four projects has meant that Queensland's criminal justice system remains unintegrated. At best, some limited points of interface exist between entities. There is still a lot of manual entry of information at various points. This makes it difficult for criminal justice entities to share information in a timely and reliable manner.

With some effort, the data of the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (through its Queensland Courts Service, Queensland Corrective Services, and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions) can be linked and used to inform, develop, implement, and evaluate effective criminal justice strategies, policy, and processes. But at present, the entities are not managing their data in an integrated way.

The absence of integrated criminal justice data constrains the criminal justice entities in demonstrating their effectiveness and efficiency to government and the broader public.

Introduction

In 2002, the government recognised the need for greater integration across the criminal justice system, and in particular for sharing criminal justice information and data. A review by the Criminal Justice Commission concluded that a lack of coordinated systems across the criminal justice system constrained government's capacity to identify the consequences of justice system policy.

In response to these findings, the government established the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program (the program). The government intended the program to improve the integration of the criminal justice system and enable more efficient sharing of information between criminal justice entities.

The program ran from 2002–03 to 2009–10, consisted of 16 individual projects, and had an overall budget of $67 million. The Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services, and the then Department of Communities all participated in the program.

In this chapter, we examine whether information and data is integrated and accessible across the criminal justice system. By this, we mean how effectively and efficiently data is shared and accessible to those who need it.

We assess whether the criminal justice entities managed the program effectively to deliver its intended outcomes, including:

- greater capacity to investigate and prevent crime

- more effective policy development, evaluation, and implementation

- more expeditious service and management of processes

- improved safety for the community and criminal justice personnel.

We expected to find information flows and data linkages across the criminal justice system that enabled entities to analyse trends, improve systems, and develop effective policy.

Audit conclusions

Criminal justice entities have progressed but not delivered on the government's objective to have an integrated criminal justice system. Despite having spent approximately $62 million, the program only completed six of the planned and budgeted 16 projects. It partially delivered another six and discontinued four. This means the program has not delivered value for money, and many manual processes and interfaces remain across criminal justice entities.

This lack of integration and linking remains a barrier to sharing criminal justice data in a timely, complete, and accurate manner. It has impeded and continues to impede Queensland's criminal justice entities in undertaking system-wide analysis and reporting. Consequently, the entities do not have a full understanding of crime trends to inform criminal justice policy. Nor do they have easy access to the information required to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system.

We acknowledge that the criminal justice entities have recognised the need to continue working towards the program's intended outcomes. As the needs identified in the original program business case are as compelling now as they were then, justice sector entities are working on some new projects aimed at improving integration.

Integrated Justice Information Strategy program

Poor governance, scope changes, and siloed approaches resulted in the program failing to deliver planned outcomes. The strength of the program design was its complementary suite of projects. Failing to complete the full suite of projects diluted the benefits the criminal justice sector entities received.
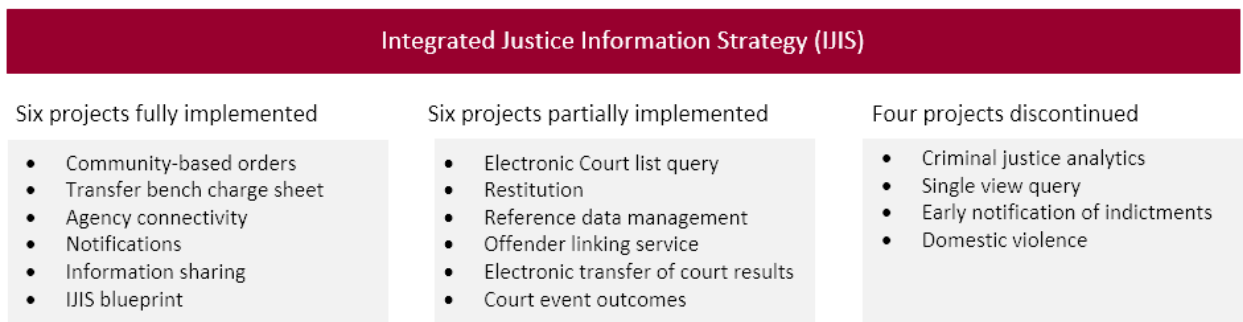
Governance

A lack of clear accountability and responsibility hindered the program in delivering its intended outcomes.

The chief executive officer and steering committee of the program failed to establish effective governance arrangements to monitor the progress of projects and ensure they were delivered on time and within budget. Performance targets were generally informally agreed, and accountability for project completion was self-governed by agencies. This resulted in the partial implementation of projects, and in delays and budget overruns.

In the end of program report, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General stated that the program suffered from differences between internal agency priorities and cross-agency priorities. At times, participating agencies diverted resources away from the program due to internal priorities, often resulting in project delays.

From July 2002 to June 2010, 16 projects were undertaken under the program. Six of the 16 projects were fully implemented. Figure 3A lists the 16 projects and their status at the end of the program.

Figure 3A
Integrated Justice Information Strategy program—project status

Integrated Justice Information Strategy (IJIS)		
Six projects fully implemented	**Six projects partially implemented**	**Four projects discontinued**
• Community-based orders • Transfer bench charge sheet • Agency connectivity • Notifications • Information sharing • IJIS blueprint	• Electronic Court list query • Restitution • Reference data management • Offender linking service • Electronic transfer of court results • Court event outcomes	• Criminal justice analytics • Single view query • Early notification of indictments • Domestic violence

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Reported cost

The Cabinet Budget Review Committee received three separate funding submissions from July 2002 to June 2010 and approved $67 794 175 to be spent on the program. $6 284 168 was unspent and returned to Queensland Treasury, but it is not documented when this occurred.

In December 2009, the program's steering committee stated in its end of program report that a budget of $62 949 007 had been allocated to the program and a total of $62 746 179 had been spent (a claimed underspend of $202 828). Approximately $42 million was spent on implementing the projects. Appendix C provides a breakdown of the budget and actual spend for each project. An additional $20 million (approximately) was spent on maintaining the new project systems. The steering committee provided no explanation as to why the budget recorded in its end of program report differed from the budget approved by the Cabinet Budget Review Committee.

Further to this, the end of program report did not take into account the value of several major projects that were removed from scope on 19 June 2008. Implementation of the four projects that were discontinued was forecast to cost an additional $15 069 778. If these projects had not been removed from scope, the actual total spend on the program would have been $77 815 957 (assuming those four projects spent the planned budget).

Actual cost

Due to poor record keeping and a lack of accurate and transparent reportable costs, there is little assurance that the total reported spend for the program is correct. The steering committee only included in the end of program report the forecasted costs for each project, instead of the actual costs. Further to this, the costs of several projects were grouped together, making it difficult to determine the actual spend for each project.

We identified discrepancies in the actual cost of projects recorded in a status report dated 22 July 2008 compared to the cost of projects recorded in the end of program report dated 2 December 2009. Figure 3B captures discrepancies totalling $532 419 in the reported cost for three projects.

Figure 3B
Discrepancy in reported costs

Project	Actual cost reported at 22 July 2008	Forecast cost reported at 2 December 2009
Restitution (partially implemented)	$23 000	$22 760
Criminal justice analytics (discontinued)	$605 846	$74 000
Early notification of indictments (discontinued)	$189 950	$189 617
Total	$818 796	$286 377

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Of the 12 projects fully or partially implemented:

- four projects were under budget by a total of $5 969 717 (three of the four projects under budget were only partially implemented)

- four projects were over budget by a total of $21 558 135.

For the remaining four projects—community-based orders, court event outcomes, information sharing, and the integrated justice information strategy blueprint—there was insufficient supporting documentation to determine the actual cost.

Scope changes

In December 2009, the program steering committee stated in its end of program report that the four projects were not progressed due to a low benefits assessment. However, in a replanning document dated April 2008, it reported the scope change was due to a lack of funding. The steering committee did not document its benefits assessment or decision-making process to support the de-scoping of these projects.

A total of $960 241 was spent on the four discontinued projects. The entities involved have recently resurrected some of these projects and some of the partially implemented projects at an additional cost.

The domestic violence project is one of the resurrected projects. This project was intended to simplify the creation and registration of domestic violence applications and orders. A budget of $1 935 000 was approved for it. Despite the clear need to make the application process more efficient, the steering committee assessed it as a low priority and the project was discontinued in July 2008. No costs were recorded against it. The government has recently spent $1 591 881 streamlining the electronic transfer of domestic violence applications and orders and estimates an additional $500 000 will be spent at completion.

The criminal justice analytics project was designed to enable more consistent, timely, and integrated criminal justice system reporting. The single view query project was intended to share data across agencies to build a single, consolidated view of an offender for authorised users. Both projects would have improved the capability of criminal justice entities to analyse criminal justice data and evaluate criminal justice policy.

Automating information flows

The program sought to expedite services and the management of process. Projects such as the electronic transfer of bench charge sheets (which electronically lodges an offender's charge with courts) and of court results have automated previously manual processes. While it is logical that this would have resulted in efficiency gains, criminal justice entities were unable to provide us with data to quantify the efficiency gains from these projects.

Transfer bench charge sheets

In June 2005, this project enabled the Queensland Police Service to electronically transfer bench charge sheets to the courts for charges to be heard in the Magistrates Court. Prior to the project's implementation, the Queensland Police Service hand-delivered paper-based bench charge sheets to the Magistrates Court. Over 90 per cent of court matters originate from Queensland Police Service via a bench charge sheet.

Between January 2011 and December 2015, 1 033 627 (97.5 per cent) of bench charge sheets were sent electronically from the Queensland Police Service to the Magistrates Court. Only 26 045 (2.5 per cent) of bench charge sheets were sent manually.

Electronic transfer of court results

The electronic transfer of court results was implemented in September 2009, nine months after its original deadline. This replaced existing paper-based systems, enabling the electronic transfer of court results from Magistrates Courts to the Queensland Police Service; the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Queensland Corrective Services was the only criminal justice entity that chose not to implement the electronic transfer of court results. It could not provide evidence to support its decision-making. In November 2015, it commenced a project with Queensland Court Services to implement the electronic transfer of court results. Since the implementation of the electronic transfer of court results, only one in every 1 784 court results sent electronically has had a transmission error that required the result to be re-sent.

Although the electronic transfer of court results has led to efficiency gains, it applies to Magistrates Courts only. It is not available for the transfer of other court results, such as those from the District and Supreme Courts. Even in the Magistrates Courts, not all results are transferred electronically. Proceedings initiated by non-Queensland Police Service agencies, such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, are still sent manually. This information is useful to the Queensland Police Service from an investigative and intelligence perspective, particularly for animal cruelty offences, which can be an indicator of future human violence.

Manual entry points

While there has been an improvement in information flows, Queensland's criminal justice system remains unintegrated. As identified in *Criminal Justice System—prison sentences* (Report 4: 2016–17), the limited interface between the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system, the Queensland Wide Interlinked Courts (QWIC) system and Queensland Corrective Services' Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS) results in multiple manual points of entry. This is inefficient, duplicates efforts, and increases the risk of an error occurring. Further to this, the lack of integration hinders the accessibility and timely sharing of data across the criminal justice system.

Figure 3C displays the manual points of information flow across the criminal justice system.

Figure 3C
Information flow across Queensland criminal justice system
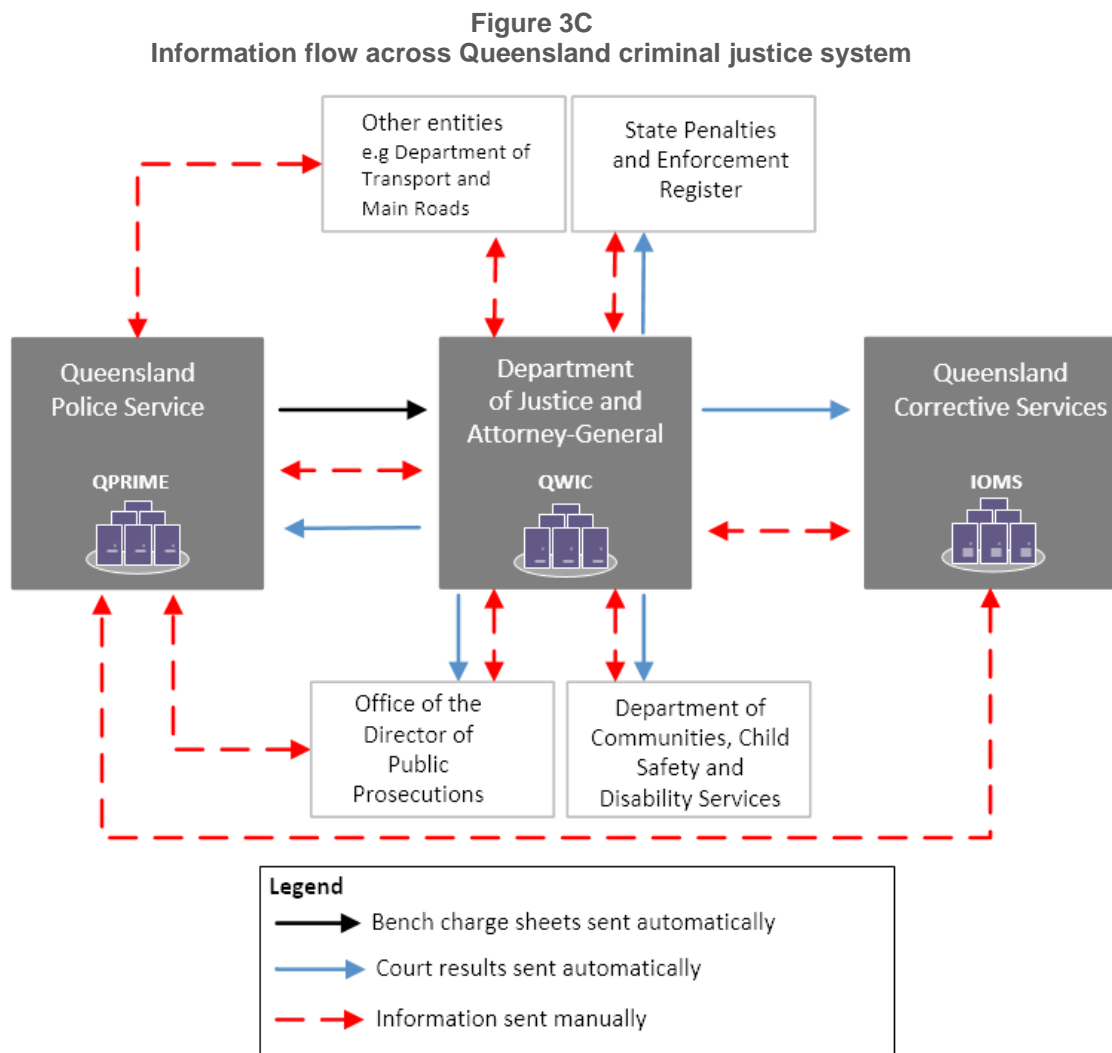
Note: Information other than transfer bench charge sheets and court results is sent manually between criminal justice entities and stakeholders.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Figure 3C shows there is no systems interface between the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Queensland Police Service. This is a significant gap in integration of data across the criminal justice system. It means that entities are unable to accurately and reliably follow the flow of offenders through the system.

Integrating criminal justice data

The program sought to deliver more effective policy development, evaluation, and implementation. Its objective was to integrate criminal justice data across entities to deliver system-wide statistical information for strategic and policy-related decision-making. The program intended to achieve this through the following projects:

- offender linking

- reference data management

- criminal justice analytics

- the single view query project.

Despite spending approximately $6.3 million on these projects, the program failed to deliver more effective policy development, evaluation, and implementation because criminal justice data remains unintegrated. This is a result of the partial implementation of the offender linking and the reference data management projects and the de-scoping of the criminal justice analytics and single view query projects. Other agency-specific initiatives, such as the Queensland Police Service's single person identifier, have not successfully linked data across the criminal justice system.

Because of the absence of integrated criminal justice data, the government, parliament, and the public have to rely on entity-specific reporting that is done by the individual components of the system.

Offender linking project

The offender linking project was designed to link data across the criminal justice system to enable criminal justice entities to track an offender through the system.

The offender linking project was partially implemented in September 2009 at a cost of $3 371 033. The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services was the only criminal justice entity that implemented the offender linking project.

Due to siloed approaches and competing priorities, the uptake of the offender linking project was poor. The Queensland Police Service did not see value in the project and therefore chose not to use it. Queensland Corrective Services chose not to implement the electronic transfer of court results and therefore, the offender linking functionality was never developed.

The limited use of offender linking means criminal justice agencies cannot use linked offender data to identify trends both at an agency level and more broadly at a system level. Nor can they use the linked offender data to develop, implement, and evaluate effective criminal justice strategies and policy.

Single person identifier

The single person identifier is a unique identification number that the Queensland Police Service assigns to a person whose details it records in its QPRIME database.

In November 2011, the police began sharing the single person identifier more broadly with other criminal justice entities. This was intended to enable criminal justice agencies to track offenders as they progress through the criminal justice system.

On average, 92 per cent of individuals recorded in each of the criminal justice entities' databases have a single person identifier. Figure 3D captures the coverage of the single person identifier across each of the criminal justice entities' databases.

Figure 3D
Single person identifier coverage

Agency	Total number of offenders	Offenders with a single person identifier	Single person identifier coverage
Queensland Police Service	498 015	497 644	99.9%
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	37 569	37 399	99.5%
Queensland Court Services	463 995	390 214	84.1%
Queensland Corrective Services	83 274	66 626	80%
Total	**1 082 853**	**991 883**	**91.6%**

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

The coverage of the single person identifier across each of the criminal justice entities' databases is relatively high. But the coverage in QWIC and IOMS is insufficient to maximise its use for linking offenders across the system.

Also, changes that the Queensland Police Service makes to the single person identifier in QPRIME do not flow through the criminal justice system to QWIC and IOMS. For example, if the Queensland Police Service merges a single person identifier because an offender has more than one single person identifier, or if it splits a single person identifier because two different offenders have the same single person identifier, these changes are not reflected in QWIC or IOMS, or in other stakeholder databases.

Criminal justice entities sought to reconcile single person identifier records. In 2012, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, including Queensland Corrective Services, provided single person identifier data to the Queensland Police Service. The Queensland Police Service reviewed records in QPRIME and sent matches back to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Queensland Corrective Services.

As part of the 2013–16 Integrated Criminal Justice Strategic Plan, criminal justice entities agreed they would continue to incorporate the single person identifier (SPI) into their databases. This was to improve:

> … visibility of individuals' engagement with the criminal justice system over time [in order to] better manage, evaluate the effectiveness of, and improve criminal justice policy instruments, interventions and services.

This was also to include the establishment of '… an SPI provisioning service through which justice agencies can apply to the QPS for allocation of a SPI to records in their databases'.

The service was never implemented as other work was subsequently prioritised, such as electronic lodgement of domestic violence applications.

Analysing integrated justice system data

In our first report, *Criminal Justice System—prison sentences* (Report 4: 2016–17), we demonstrated the benefit of integrated reporting for monitoring and managing errors in detaining and discharging prisoners.

Queensland's criminal justice system could be using linked data to improve practices, systems, and policy—both at an agency and system level. Linked data enables criminal justice entities to perform multi-layered analysis that provides a more complete and comprehensive picture.

To demonstrate the value of linking data across the criminal justice system, we linked and analysed data from QPRIME, QWIC, and IOMS. Through this analysis, we were able to identify:

- system pressure points and anomalies
- manual practices and inefficiencies
- offender movements through the criminal justice system.

An example of this was the analysis we performed on the inputs into QWIC. Using the linked data, we analysed the major inputs for Queensland courts and identified anomalies in court lodgements. The Queensland Police Service was responsible for 91 per cent (1 047 827) of all lodgements with Queensland courts between 2010–11 and 2015–16. An additional nine percent (102 099) were lodged by other entities, including 28 050 by local councils.

One council was responsible for lodging 89 per cent (24 918) of the 28 050 lodged by local councils. Rather than lodging unpaid fines with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, this council lodged unpaid fines with the Magistrates Court. Although this yielded a better recovery rate for the council, it created additional workload for the Magistrates Court. Practices such as these put further strain on the Queensland courts' backlog of lodgements, which continues to increase.

An entity like the independent crime statistics body, once established, could use linked data to identify specific trends in crime and recidivism (repeat offending).

Appendices

Appendix A—Full responses from agencies

As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to relevant ministers, Queensland Police Service, the Public Safety Business Agency and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

The heads of these agencies are responsible for the accuracy, fairness and balance of their comments.

This appendix contains their detailed responses to our audit recommendations.

Comments received from Minister for Police Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and
Minister for Corrective Services

Ref No: 17716 P1 LE

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2 1 APR 2017

Mr Anthony Close
Acting Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Close

Thank you for your letter dated 31 March 2017 and for forwarding a draft report of the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) performance audit on the criminal justice system – reliability and integration of data.

I appreciate the opportunity to review the draft report.

The need for government and the community to have access to accurate criminal justice data cannot be understated. This data informs social and economic policy, guides public and private investment decisions and informs criminal justice strategy and tactics. It also provides the community with a meaningful insight into the performance of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) and Queensland Corrective Services (QCS).

It is evident from the draft report, that there is a need to improve the standard and rigour of criminal justice data recorded and managed by criminal justice agencies. I have received briefings from the QPS and QCS on the draft report.
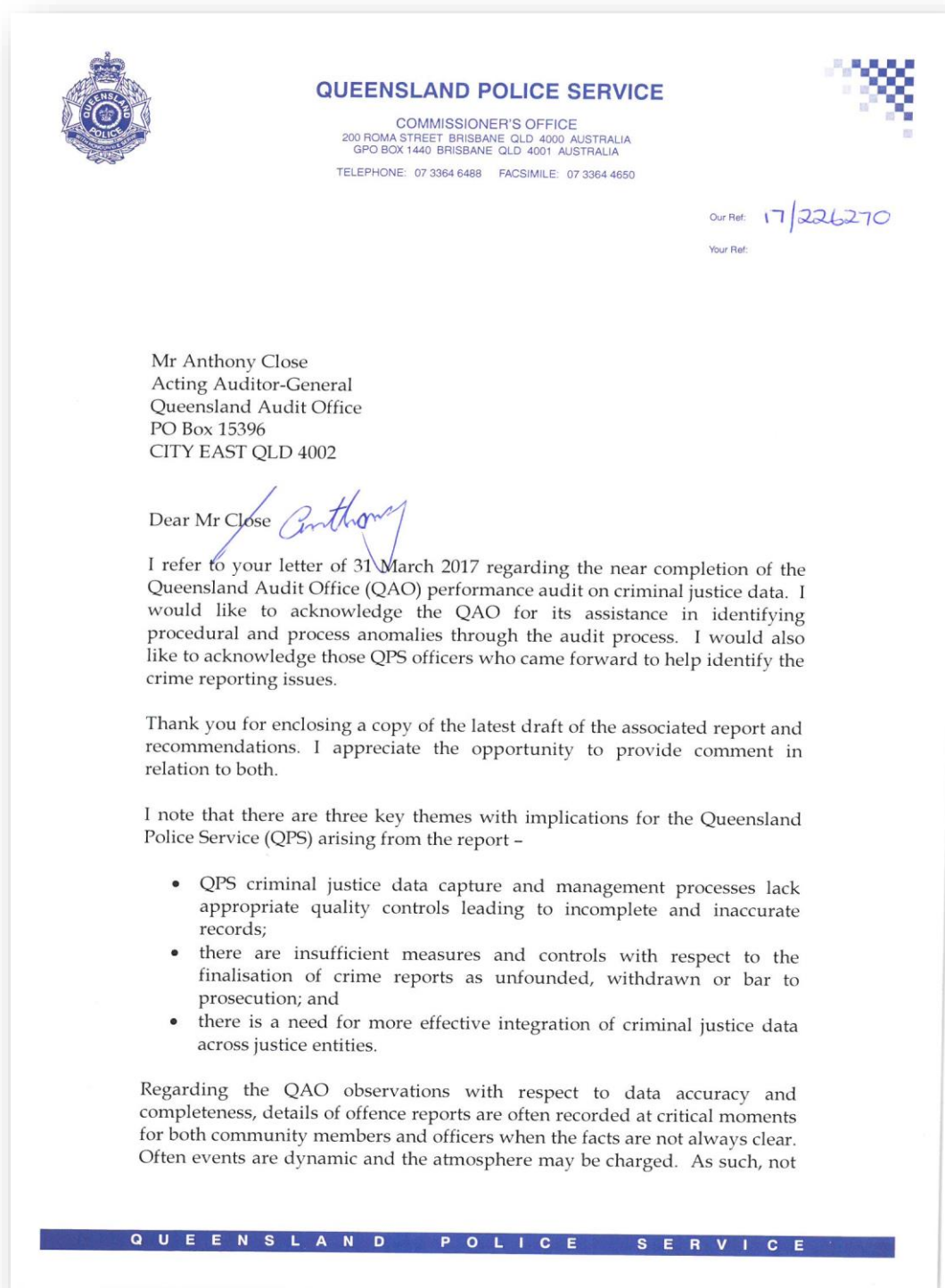
I am advised that QPS, PSBA and QCS have commenced implementation of a number of initiatives and measures to address the concerns identified in the draft report and I have requested regular updates from my departments.

I appreciate the work of the QAO in identifying opportunities to improve practices and processes in the capture and reporting of criminal justice data.

Should you require further information, Ms Ellen McIntyre, Chief of Staff, is available on telephone

Yours sincerely

The Honourable Mark Ryan MP
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and
Minister for Corrective Services

Comments received from Commissioner of Police, Queensland Police Service

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
200 ROMA STREET BRISBANE QLD 4000 AUSTRALIA
GPO BOX 1440 BRISBANE QLD 4001 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE: 07 3364 6488   FACSIMILE: 07 3364 4650

Our Ref: 17/226270

Your Ref:

Mr Anthony Close
Acting Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Close *Anthony*

I refer to your letter of 31 March 2017 regarding the near completion of the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) performance audit on criminal justice data. I would like to acknowledge the QAO for its assistance in identifying procedural and process anomalies through the audit process. I would also like to acknowledge those QPS officers who came forward to help identify the crime reporting issues.

Thank you for enclosing a copy of the latest draft of the associated report and recommendations. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment in relation to both.

I note that there are three key themes with implications for the Queensland Police Service (QPS) arising from the report –

- QPS criminal justice data capture and management processes lack appropriate quality controls leading to incomplete and inaccurate records;
- there are insufficient measures and controls with respect to the finalisation of crime reports as unfounded, withdrawn or bar to prosecution; and
- there is a need for more effective integration of criminal justice data across justice entities.

Regarding the QAO observations with respect to data accuracy and completeness, details of offence reports are often recorded at critical moments for both community members and officers when the facts are not always clear. Often events are dynamic and the atmosphere may be charged. As such, not

Q U E E N S L A N D   P O L I C E   S E R V I C E

all details will be immediately available to officers and indeed officers may have to update an offence report on a number of occasions to ensure the relevant information is captured. Humans are involved and there will be errors. Many of these errors or omissions, however, are minor in nature and do not compromise the utility of the record.

The problem of accurate and timely crime reporting and associated statistical data is not unique to Queensland – it is a multi-jurisdictional and international issue that has received significant attention in recent times.

It is also evident that the classification system used in crime recording is complex, and misinterpretation of that system has contributed to classification errors. Action will be taken to improve the system, including improved guidance for officers in interpreting classifications.

The QPS has been working closely with the QAO since the issues were first identified and has been proactive in undertaking a detailed and comprehensive audit of almost 60,000 crime reports that involved a line by line review by senior managers. I can confirm that all anomalies identified have been corrected. It is also worth noting that this audit did not reveal any misconduct or intention to deceive by any officer.

I can also confirm that a number of measures have or are being put in place to validate classifications of unfounded, withdrawn and bar to prosecution. Ethical Standards Command have broadened the inspections regime to address this issue and district crime managers will be tasked to review all incident reports finalised in this manner. The training needs of crime managers will be reviewed to ensure they have the requisite training for the duties required of them.

Work has also commenced on improvements to our governance and quality assurance systems aimed at improving crime reporting quality and accuracy.

Notwithstanding the comments above, I am acutely aware of the need for the Queensland community to have confidence in the criminal justice information derived from QPS data. It is an integral element of policy development and offers a gauge by which our success as an agency can be measured, amongst other applications. If there is a lack of confidence in the information provided to the community, by extension, confidence in the QPS is diminished.

The QPS is strongly committed to continuous improvement and this report affords us an opportunity to address shortcomings in a system that is fundamental to our day to day business and if left unchecked would pose a significant reputational risk.

The issue of crime reporting and associated governance will be put on the agenda for the forthcoming National Commissioners of Police Conference. The matter of leadership responsibility regarding data integrity and an increased focus on risk management procedures has been emphasised with Assistant Commissioners, District Officers, and divisional leadership.

Accordingly, I wish to confirm my agency's full support for QPS specific recommendations 1, 2 and 3. Much of the work necessary to deliver those recommendations has either been completed or is presently underway. A detailed account of work proposed (and completed) in support of those recommendations is attached at annexure 'A'.
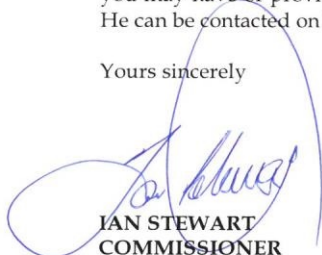
With respect to recommendations 4 and 5 which are joint QPS and Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA), both relate to quality assurance measures associated with the development of crime statistics which are the purview of Statistical Services, PSBA. Whilst PSBA have indicated a willingness to take the lead to deliver those recommendations, as the client agency, the QPS stands ready to assist the PSBA as required.

Finally, the QPS will contribute to the delivery of recommendation 7 through its representation on the Integrated Justice Committee alongside members of the PSBA and representatives on the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Whilst I have briefly touched on some of the activities proposed or underway to meet the requirements of the report recommendations, the annexure provides a greater level of detail and proposed timeframes for the QPS program of work.

Assistant Commissioner Allan McCarthy is available to discuss any concerns you may have or provide any information you may require moving forward. He can be contacted on

Yours sincerely

IAN STEWART
COMMISSIONER

Responses to recommendations

Queensland Police Service (QPS), Criminal justice system — Reliability and integration of data (Report No. XX: 2016–17)

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation (Quarter and Year)	Additional comments
We recommend that the Queensland Police Service:			
1. improves its offence standards and classification guidelines. (Chapter 2) Improvements are to include clarifying the definitions of offences and the rules and examples for classifying and re-classifying offences.	Agree	Q4 2017	Queensland Police statistics are based on a set of rules and practices that classify data aligned with Qld Government and ANZPAA standards. Accordingly: • The Commissioner will raise standards, classification and this report as an agenda item at a future Australian Police Commissioner's Forum; and • A review of Policelink PIR and other system documentation to clarify / simplify crime data collection and recording processes has commenced and will be completed.
2. strengthens its independent quality assurance processes for data capture, classification, amending, updating, and reporting of crime data. (Chapter 2) Strengthening quality assurance should have regard to: • developing and implementing a quality assurance framework and guidelines • regularly auditing and reporting on the quality, completeness, and accuracy of QPRIME data and data classification • identifying types of data and practices at risk of error or manipulation and ensuring appropriate controls are in place to ensure validity • monitoring the data and data trends to identify and check for changes which may indicate poor practice or manipulation • ensuring accountable and independent decision-making where issues or disputes arise around the data or the status of a	Agree	Q4 2017	QPS has commenced work in this area and will undertake the following to address the recommendation: • Implement a revised quality assurance framework in policy including the delivery of training to relevant personnel; • Ethical Standards Command to embed quarterly criminal justice data audits to ensure appropriate application of policy, process and procedure; • Policelink Client Service Officers will rigorously challenge changes to classification of crime reports. An escalation process will be implemented whereby disagreements between CSO and officers will be referred to Inspector Operations, Policelink. If the matter remains unresolved it may be escalated further and dealt with by Superintendent Policelink and the relevant district officer; • Policelink QPRIME tasking manual has been updated to include requirement for crime managers to endorse classifications of unfounded and withdrawn as an additional

	report.			quality management step.
3.	Trains all staff responsible for crime data integrity and quality appropriately. (Chapter 2) Staff should be trained in the Queensland recording guidelines, national crime recording standard manual, and the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification.	Agree	Q2 2018	QPS will facilitate the upskilling of crime managers to ensure they have an awareness of and are applying quality assurance controls and practices consistently. The QPS will deliver a more broadly targeted awareness or training package to ensure members have a clear understanding of their obligations with respect to data integrity and quality.

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service and the Public Safety Business Agency:

4.	ensure there are appropriate guidelines, policy, and training for reporting, classifying, and managing crime statistics. (Chapter 2)	-	-	PSBA is responding to this recommendation given the role of Statistical Services as the provider of criminal justice data on behalf of the Service. QPS undertakes to support PSBA as required in the delivery of this recommendation.
5.	include in reported crime statistics detail of what is included and excluded from the statistics. (Chapter 2)	-	-	PSBA is responding to this recommendation given the role of Statistical Services as the provider of criminal justice data on behalf of the Service. QPS undertakes to support PSBA as required in the delivery of this recommendation.

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General:

6.	reviews its quality assurance practices for data extraction scripts for reporting of corrective service measures. (Chapter 2)	n/a	n/a	DJAG specific recommendation. No QPS comment.

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Public Safety Business Agency:

7.	collaborate with relevant agencies and stakeholders to progress integrating the criminal justice system.	Agree	Ongoing	The Integrated Criminal Justice (ICJ) Committee is responsible for this and this activity is reflected in its Terms of Reference (TOR). The QPS is represented on and is committed to this forum. QPRIME is currently integrated with these systems and the eDV project is a recent example of a significant improvement in this area. The age and enterprise architecture of the existing versions of agency systems needs to be considered when evaluating further investment in integration.

Comments received from Chief Operating Officer, Public Safety Business Agency

Queensland
Government

**Public Safety
Business Agency**

File No: PSB/00120
Ref No: 02153-2017
Your Ref: 2016-9148P

Mr Anthony Close
Auditor-General (acting)
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Close

I am writing in regards to your letter of 31 March 2017 about the performance audit on criminal justice system-reliability and integration of data conducted by the Queensland Audit Office (QAO).

I understand that the QAO has been working closely with the Information and Data Services Directorate within Frontline and Digital Services, Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) since the audit commenced in 2016. While the Information and Data Services Directorate provides a data extraction and analysis service to the Queensland Police Service, it does not provide a data quality assurance role.

As the body of the audit focused on the Queensland Police Service in regard to its data collection processes, PSBA has responded specifically to recommendations 4, 5 and 7 of the audit findings. In regard to these recommendations, Information and Data Services will work with the appropriate agencies to ensure a suitable outcome.

Should you require further assistance, please contact Mr James Hinchliffe, Director, Information and Data Services, PSBA on telephone   or email

Yours sincerely

Peter Griffin
Chief Operating Officer
Public Safety Business Agency

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Reponses to recommendations

Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA), Criminal justice system — Reliability and integration of data (Report No. XX: 2016–17)

Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for Implementation (Quarter and Year)	Additional Comments
We recommend that the Queensland Police Service and the Public Safety Business Agency:			
4. ensure there are appropriate and relevant guidelines, policy, and training for reporting, classifying, and managing crime statistics. (Chapter 2)	Agree	Q2 2018	
5. include in reported crime statistics detail of what is included and excluded from the statistics. (Chapter 2)	Agree	Q2 2018	PSBA, Statistical Services provides caveats including what is included and excluded in crime statistics when they are disseminated. Definitions and methodologies for collection and collating crime statistics are published in the QPS Annual Statistical Review, the Australian Bureau of Statistics website and the Government Statisticians' Office web site. This could be broadened to provide a more comprehensive coverage of crime statistics than those that are disseminated via the above means.
We recommend that the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Public Safety Business Agency:			PSBA Statistical Services has been working with DJAG and the QPS in regard to incorporating the Single Person Identifier.
7. collaborate with relevant agencies and stakeholders to progress integrating the criminal justice system. (Chapter 3)	Agree		

Comments received from Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Office of the Director-General

Queensland
Government

In reply please quote: 579722/1, 3712166

Your reference: 2016-9148P

2 1 APR 2017

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Dear Mr Close

Thank you for your letter dated 31 March 2017 enclosing your preliminary performance audit report, Criminal justice system – reliability and integration of data.

I note the report comprehensively considers how well Queensland's criminal justice entities capture, report and use data to ensure its reliability and integration across the justice system. My comments in relation to the report are set out below. This is the combined comments of Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) and the Queensland Courts Service (Courts).

Recidivism

As highlighted in the report, the rate of prisoners and offenders returning to corrective services within two years of being released or discharged is a criminal justice sector effectiveness measure which is not attributable to a single entity.

Your report identifies issues with inaccurate reporting by QCS in relation to reoffending rates. It is contextually important to note that QCS identified issues with the return to corrective services data and extraction scripts and reported these issues to Queensland Parliament's Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in October 2015. QCS identified the anomalies with the data extraction scripts in October 2014 while preparing data for the 2015 Report on Government Services (RoGS) and immediately commenced an investigation into the anomalies in order to resolve the issues. QCS finalised the investigation into the data extraction anomalies during 2015, resolving all issues identified.

Additionally, the calculation of the returns to corrective services measures is complex and results should be interpreted with caution, particularly when attempting to make comparisons across jurisdictions. It should be noted that the consistent application of the national counting rule poses potential problems due to significant variations in legislation, practices and procedures between jurisdictions. For example, Queensland is the only jurisdiction with court ordered parole, which requires QCS to count some parolees in different categories to other jurisdictions.

(2)

<u>Offender to staff ratios</u>

Your report also identifies that QCS has under-reported the number of offenders to operational staff and over-reported the number of offenders to non-operational staff. In late 2016, QCS identified that the corporate services full time equivalent positions (FTEs) from QCS Central Office and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) had been proportionally allocated to both the 'operational staff' and 'other staff' ratios for Probation and Parole (or community corrections). However, under the RoGS counting rule for these measures, these FTEs should have only been attributed to the 'other staff' denominator. This resulted in an over reporting of the number of operational staff supervising offenders. As soon as the issue was identified, QCS proactively notified the Queensland Audit Office (QAO). A full review was undertaken and further material and immaterial anomalies were identified. These have subsequently been reported to the QAO.

Offender to Staff Ratios are calculated using nationally agreed counting rules. Counting rule definitions are not controlled by QCS but are determined by the National Corrections Advisory Group (NCAG). Queensland recently presented a paper at the March 2017 meeting of NCAG with a view to refining the counting rules to ensure ongoing comparability. Due to the different service delivery models and data collection systems in operation in each State and Territory, it is likely that the national counting rules will continue to be framed in general terms with each State or Territory determining how to best operationalise each rule in its jurisdiction. The NCAG review of this counting rule is ongoing and will be discussed further at the November 2017 meeting.

QCS will continue reviewing quality assurance practices to ensure work is accurate and in line with national counting rules.

<u>Integrated Criminal Justice</u>

DJAG is committed to ongoing collaboration with the Queensland Police Service, the Public Safety Business Agency, other relevant agencies and stakeholder areas through the Integrated Criminal Justice (ICJ) forum to improve criminal justice processes and information sharing.

Integrated data has major operational and strategic performance benefits. Such integration was a factor in the streamlining of cross-sector domestic violence information exchange and reconciliation of Single Person Identifier (SPI) information in agencies' records. These are both identified as ICJ Collaborations in Chapter 3 of the report.

However, it must be acknowledged that integration requires significant additional resources which are not currently available. DJAG will explore with partner agencies what data and information sharing improvements can be made within existing resources.

(3)

Recommendations

As requested, I enclose a table of recommendations with DJAG's response. DJAG accepts the relevant recommendations 6 and 7 in the report.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed report, I would appreciate it if you would publish this response with the report when it is tabled in Parliament.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

David Mackie
Director-General

Enc.

Responses to recommendations

eDocs 3707052

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and Year)	Additional Comments
We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General: 6. reviews its quality assurance practices for data extraction scripts for reporting of corrective services measures. (Chapter 2)	Agree	June 2017	The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Queensland Corrective Services) has revised its scripts for reporting of prisoners/offenders returning to corrections and offender to staff ratios. The revised counts of prisoners/offenders returning to corrective services were published in the 2017 Report on Government Services (RoGS). Revised offender to staff ratios will be published in the 2018 RoGS. Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) actively participates in the National Corrections Advisory Group (NCAG), which is responsible for coordinating the ongoing development of corrective services performance reporting in Australia. Where issues relating to the interpretation or comparability of national counting rules are identified, these are referred to NCAG for consideration of any potential refinement to counting rules. QCS manages data quality through its internal Data Integrity Group, which is responsible for overseeing the development and maintenance of the QCS data dictionary and the associated counting rules. The data dictionary provides a descriptive list of names, definitions and counting rules to be captured in information systems or databases for recording purposes. QCS has also established a peer review process to assure the integrity of data proposed for public release. This process will be documented by June 2017.
We recommend that the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Public Safety Business Agency: 7. Collaborate with relevant agencies and stakeholders to progress integrating the criminal justice system. (Chapter 3)	Agree	December 2018	The Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Public Safety Business Agency and other stakeholder-areas are committed to collaborating through the Integrated Criminal Justice (ICI) forum to improve criminal justice processes and information sharing. Integration of data and information will require significant additional resources which are not currently available. However, DJAG will explore with its partner agencies what data and information sharing improvements can be made within existing resources. Specifically DJAG will explore with its partner agencies: • developing a shared, holistic view of the criminal justice system; and • maintaining existing ICI information systems, while reducing the cost and complexity to more easily and effectively respond to the criminal justice sector's information needs.

Appendix B—Audit objectives and methods

This is the second of two reports for this audit.

The objective of the audit is to determine the reliability of criminal justice data and whether it is used cost-effectively. The audit addresses the objective through the following lines of inquiry and criteria:

Figure B1
Audit program

Lines of inquiry		Criteria	
1	Criminal justice data is reliable	1.1	Criminal justice data is complete, accurate, valid, and recorded in a timely manner.
		1.2	Criminal justice data information systems have appropriate data integrity controls.
2	Relevant criminal justice data is integrated and accessible only to criminal justice agencies that need it	2.1	Criminal justice data is linked across the criminal justice system enabling effective exchange of data.
		2.2	Relevant criminal justice data is readily accessible to appropriate criminal justice agencies without compromising information security/confidentiality/privacy.
3	Criminal justice data is used effectively by criminal justice agencies	3.1	Criminal justice data is analysed regularly to identify trends and develop, implement, and evaluate criminal justice strategies and policy.
		3.2	Reporting of criminal justice data is valid, unambiguous, accurate, and transparent in disclosing limitations.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Reason for the audit

The availability and reliability of crime and sentencing statistics is important in order to be able to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the state's criminal justice system.

From July 2002 to December 2009, the Queensland Government spent $62.746 million on its Integrated Justice Information System program, with the objectives to:

- investigate and develop an electronically-based information sharing system between criminal justice agencies (replacing legacy paper-based document sharing practices)

- streamline existing information exchange processes

- develop rules to guide what, when, and how information is shared between the respective agencies.

Over the past five years, the integrity of Queensland's criminal justice data and the statistics that are reported has been questioned. Similarly, other jurisdictions like Victoria have identified anomalies in the way crimes are recorded, leading to a significant distortion of crime clearance rates.

In response, the Queensland Government, in its 2015–16 and 2016–17 state budgets, has committed a total of $8.4 million over three years to establish an independent crime statistics body. Its stated purpose in establishing this body is to collect data and monitor organised crime, as well as impacts and trends across all crime types.

Performance audit approach

We conducted the audit in accordance with the Auditor-General of Queensland Auditing Standards, which incorporate Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards.

The audit was conducted between March 2016 and March 2017 and included:

- the Queensland Police Service
- the Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Queensland Corrective Services
- the Public Safety Business Agency.

We obtained information and data from three key databases: the Queensland Police Records Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) system, the Queensland Wide Interlinked Courts (QWIC) system and the Queensland Corrective Services' Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS), and held meetings with key staff and stakeholders.

We linked data across the three databases using personal identifiers and applying fuzzy logic. Using the linked data, we analysed information flows across the criminal justice system.

Assessing timeliness

Section 1.11.2 of the Queensland Police Service's operational procedure manual requires a police officer to record an offence in QPRIME within four hours of receiving a complaint. We considered any reportable offence recorded after four hours to be late.

We assessed the ratio of late reportable offences as a percentage of total reportable offences.

Assessing accuracy and completeness

We categorised occurrence reports as incomplete and inaccurate based on the business rules in the QPRIME user guide. The business rules we used were designed to identify occurrence reports that are missing specific pieces of information that should have been recorded. For example, it identifies if there's an offender linked to an incident but some of their details are not recorded, such as gender or date of birth.

Assessing risks

We identified areas of key risk and analysed data at a state level. We selected the Gold Coast district because, while it was neither the best performing nor worst performing district across the categories we were looking at, trends in the data across the Gold Coast district suggested further investigation was necessary.

An independent reference panel provided advice to the audit team. The panel was comprised of the chief statistician from Victoria's Crime Statistics Agency and the director of the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Appendix C—Integrated Justice Information Strategy program

Appendix C documents the budget and actual cost of individual projects under the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program. It does not include maintenance and administrational costs.

Figure C1 provides a description of the six projects fully implemented under the program between July 2002 to June 2010, including their budget and actual spend.

Figure C1
Projects fully implemented

Project	Description	Budget	Actual
Community based orders	Enabled the Queensland Police Service to notify Queensland Corrective Services if an offender under their supervision is arrested or infringes an order.	No budget recorded	$74 019
Transfer bench charge sheet	Enabled the electronic transfer of the bench charge sheet from the Queensland Police Service's QPRIME system to the courts' QWIC system.	$4 102 000	$4 101 955
Agency connectivity	Facilitated information exchange between criminal justice entities' databases via the hub and spoke.	$798 000	$801 293
Information sharing	Identified issues around information sharing and recommended legislation changes.	No budget recorded	Cost not recorded
Notifications	Provided electronic notification to Queensland Corrective Services and the Department of Communities regarding the initial Magistrates Court appearances of interested parties.	$1 886 952	$6 792 911
Integrated Justice Information Strategy Blueprint	Described the working practices, processes, and the information and technology needed to deliver the integrated justice information strategy.	No budget recorded	Cost not recorded
Total		**$6 786 952**	**$11 770 178**

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Figure C2 provides a description of the six projects partially implemented under the Integrated Justice Information Strategy program between July 2002 to June 2010, including their budget and actual spend.

Figure C2
Projects partially implemented

Project	Description	Budget	Actual
Electronic Court list query	Provided criminal justice entities with electronic access to Magistrates Court lists.	$842 000	$2 188 656
Restitution	Changed legislation which enabled courts to use the enforcement capabilities of the State Penalties Enforcement Register.	$30 000	$23 000
Reference data management	Established standard definitions for shared criminal justice reference data.	$6 177 000	$2 158 535
Offender linking	Designed an offender linking map that could link offender records across criminal justice entities.	$5 315 000	$3 371 033
Electronic transfer of court results	Allowed court results to be transferred electronically from courts to criminal justice entities, the Department of Communities, and the State Penalties Enforcement Register.	$5 634 000	$20 936 227
Court event outcomes	Streamlined the process for recording court outcomes.	No budget recorded	$1 112 420
Total		**$17 998 000**	**$29 789 871**

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Figure C3 details the four projects that were discontinued.

Figure C3
Projects discontinued

Project	Description	Budget	Actual
Criminal justice analytics	This was intended to be a centralised data warehouse that could be used to extract statistics and reports through the use of business intelligence analytical tools.	$74 000	$605 846
Single view query	This was intended to be a computer search engine to give authorised users a single consolidated view of an offender across the criminal justice system.	$164 445	$164 445
Early notification of indictments	This was a process change that would have enabled the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to provide advance notification of indictments to be presented at the call over (the date on which an offender's charge is to be handed to the judge).	No budget recorded	$189 950
Domestic violence	This was made up of information technology enhancements designed to improve the administration, management, and processing of domestic violence applications and orders.	$1 935 000	No cost recorded
Total		**$2 173 445**	**$960 241**

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Appendix D—Criminal justice system flows

Figure D1 shows the typical flow of events in the criminal justice system. It clearly shows the roles of police, courts, and corrective services, and the sequencing of their involvement. This depiction is broadly indicative and, for brevity and clarity, does not seek to capture all the complexities of the criminal justice system or variations across jurisdictions.

Figure D1
Flows through the criminal justice system
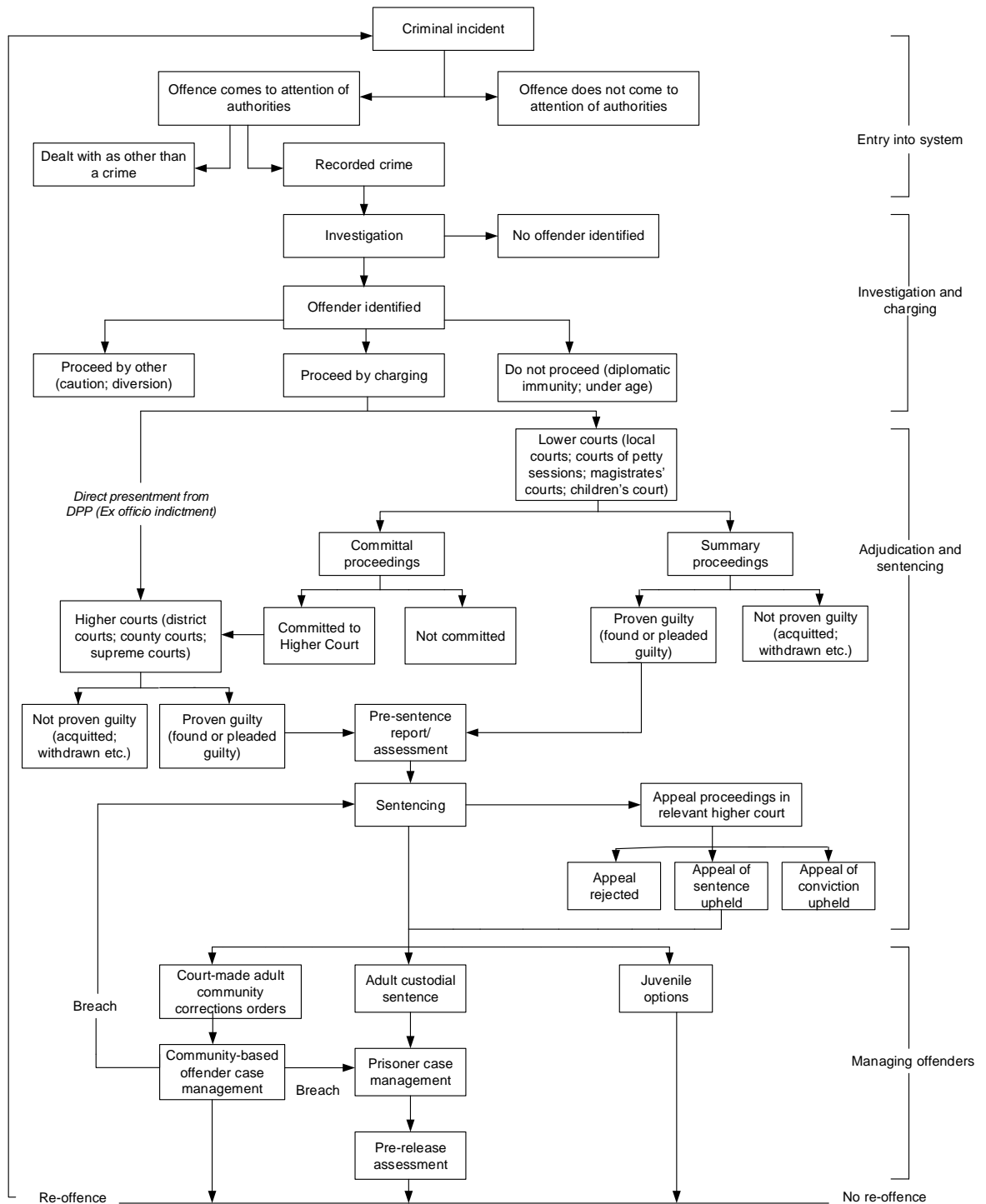
Source: Australian Government Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2015, Justice Sector Overview, Figure C.1, page C.5.

Appendix E—Letter to a victim of crime

Figure E1 is an example of a letter sent by a police officer to a victim of crime, stipulating a timeframe for the victim to contact police or their complaint will be withdrawn.

Figure E1
Letter to a victim of crime

Auditor-General Reports to Parliament

Reports tabled in 2016–17

Number	Title	Date tabled in Legislative Assembly
1.	Strategic procurement	September 2016
2.	Forecasting long-term sustainability of local government	October 2016
3.	Follow-up: Monitoring and reporting performance	November 2016
4.	Criminal justice data—prison sentences	November 2016
5.	Energy: 2015–16 results of financial audits	November 2016
6.	Rail and ports: 2015–16 results of financial audits	November 2016
7.	Water: 2015–16 results of financial audits	December 2016
8.	Queensland state government: results of financial audits	December 2016
9.	Hospital and Health Services: 2015–16 results of financial audits	January 2017
10.	Efficient and effective use of high value medical equipment	February 2017
11.	Audit of Aurukun school partnership arrangement	February 2017
12.	Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases	March 2017
13.	Local government entities: 2015–16 results of financial audits	April 2017
14.	Criminal justice system – reliability and integration of data	April 2017

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