

News releases - John Rau

More funding for Forensics to crack cold cases

John Rau

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Forensic Science SA has received additional funding through the Mid-Year Budget Review (MYBR) to employ two extra scientists, strengthening the laboratory's capacity to work on cold cases.

Forensic Science SA will receive funding of \$134,000 this financial year, increasing to \$251,000 in 2018-19 to employ additional staff, and cover ongoing operating costs, such as training, ICT services and facilities.

The new scientists will begin work with Forensic Science SA this month.

Background

In recent years SAPOL's Major Crime Branch has begun to re-investigate all unsolved murders or cold cases. Advances in technology, particularly DNA analysis and interpretation techniques, means new information can be obtained from existing samples or previously untested materials.

To date, this work has been balanced with more urgent matters, including current court cases.

This additional funding ensures scientists are available to work exclusively on these cases.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General John Rau

Often cold cases can be more than two or three decades old.

Forensic work done on these cases can be the last chance to bring closure for families who have been left seeking answers for far too long.

Dedicated resources will ensure these highly complex matters received the focus they deserve.

Quotes attributable to Forensic Science SA Director Chris Pearman

Many of these cold cases are 20 to 30 years old – and the advances in technology that have occurred in the intervening years have been nothing short of astounding.

There is simply no comparison to the methods of 30 years ago.

Then DNA technology was in its infancy and if police identified a suspect we might be able to show if there was a link between that person and a crime. Now DNA technology is far more

sensitive, we can obtain profiles from many more sample types, interrogate DNA databases for likely suspects and assess DNA results with complex DNA interpretation software, all of which provides police with far more investigative information.

The benefits are that a simple sample can give you a vast array of information – the challenge being that far more complex analysis is required to give us this information.

This is why dedicated resources who can focus solely on cold cases are so important, and these additional staff members will help these matters get the full attention they need.