

Forensic Biology/DNA Laboratory

Forensic & Analytical Science Service

PO Box 162 Lidcombe, NSW 1825

T +61 2 9646-0222 | F +61 2 9646-0333 | ABN 49 382 586 535

E NSWPATH-FASSDNA@health.nsw.gov.au



Health
Pathology

Information Sheet: DNA Quality Assurance Register

What is the DNA Quality Assurance Register?

The Forensic & Analytical Science Service (FASS) maintains this internal register which is a collection of DNA profiles generated from known individuals. These may include contractors, technicians, NSW Police and FASS staff.

Why is a Quality Assurance Register necessary?

The register is required to assist in the detection of inadvertent DNA contamination from individuals involved in the collection, handling or processing of forensic exhibits, or from individuals who have accessed areas where forensic evidence is tested.

Current DNA profiling systems are highly sensitive and can detect DNA from just a few cells. Inadvertent DNA contamination could result in a person's DNA profile being uploaded to NSW or National DNA databases and misleading information being reported to NSW Police. The DNA Quality Assurance Register helps minimise this risk.

The sensitivity of current testing means that even for FASS staff working at a different site, there is a recognised risk of transferring your DNA to the Forensic laboratory if you have contact with a Forensic DNA staff member returning to the Lidcombe site.

Providing a reference sample for inclusion on the DNA Quality Assurance Register is the only mechanism to identify inadvertent DNA contamination.

How will my sample be taken?

A DNA sample is taken by placing a swab into your mouth and rubbing the inside of your cheek with the swab. You will do this swabbing yourself. This is a minimally invasive procedure and the only possible side effect is minor irritation at the swabbing site. The risk of irritation is extremely low.

Who can access my DNA profile?

Your DNA profile will be kept on the Quality Assurance Register which is accessible only by staff in the Forensic DNA Unit. The register is used for internal quality control and is not visible to Police or any external agency.

Information Sheet: DNA Quality Assurance Register



Health
Pathology

How does the register work?

DNA profiles generated from NSW crime scenes are compared against reference profiles in the Quality Assurance Register. Your DNA profile may also be compared to profiles recovered from environmental monitoring samples. If a match is found, our Forensic DNA laboratory will investigate the match. It is generally reasonable to assume the presence of your DNA in a crime scene or environmental monitoring sample is the result of inadvertent contamination and we will then proceed to consider how that might have occurred. Steps and preventative measures are then put into place to reduce the likelihood of a similar contamination reoccurring. Importantly, this process ensures that the contaminated crime scene DNA profile is not included on the DNA searching database.

Will I be told if my DNA is detected?

If you are one of our staff or a regular on-site contractor, we will inform you if your DNA was inadvertently transferred to a forensic exhibit. Inadvertent DNA transfer by NSW Police employees is reported to the NSW Police Forensic Evidence and Technical Services Command.

Will my identity or profile be disclosed?

Legal authorities understand the sensitivities of modern DNA testing and the many ways in which DNA can be transferred inadvertently ('innocently'). The release of identifying information is generally not required.

In the rare event that the investigation determines that the match is unlikely to be the result of inadvertent contamination, the match may be reported to the NSW Police Forensic Evidence and Technical Services Command.

The identity of an individual may also be provided to the justice system in the unlikely event that a direction was received by a Court or the information was requested under subpoena.

If you are a NSW Police employee and your DNA has been inadvertently transferred to a crime scene exhibit, with your written permission, we can report the match in an Expert Certificate for court purposes. The report will use an identifier that is not your name but indicates that it is a member of the NSW Police. In many instances, the Quality Assurance Register sample is only identified using a registration number and therefore the Forensic DNA laboratory are not aware of your name. Alternatively, you can provide a new reference taken as a 'Volunteer (limited purposes)' sample under the Event number and your name will be provided in the report.

What if I refuse to give a sample?

- **New FASS employees** – Failure to give a reference sample may preclude you from being offered employment at FASS.
- **Current FASS employees** – We strongly encourage you to provide a reference sample. You have a right to refuse; however, this may restrict your activities and/or access to some of our sites.
- **Non-FASS personnel including contractors, technicians, NSW Police** – Failure to give a reference sample will most likely prevent your entry to our sites.

Information Sheet: DNA Quality Assurance Register



Health
Pathology

How do I give consent to take my sample?

A consent form is provided with this information sheet. You are required to read the form and sign it in the presence of an adult witness. The form will be retained at FASS while your reference sample remains on the register.

How long will you keep my profile?

The intention is for DNA reference profiles to be retained indefinitely as some cases, such as unsolved homicides, may be reopened at a later date. Technological advances may also see investigations reopened and we need to be able to identify any inadvertent contamination that might have occurred during the initial examination.

If you require removal of your sample from the Quality Assurance Register, a submission can be made in writing to Forensic DNA by contacting the below email address.

Can I request a copy of my profile?

The DNA reference profile consists of your gender and a series of numbers. No other identifiable information (name, occupation, contact information, etc) is included in your DNA profile. If you are interested, a copy of your profile can be provided on request by contacting us on 02 9646 0222 or by email to NSWPATH-FASSDNA@health.nsw.gov.au.

Who do I contact if I want to clarify any of the information provided in this document?

Please contact the Forensic DNA Laboratory on 02 9646 0222 or NSWPATH-FASSDNA@health.nsw.gov.au and a scientist within the Database Management Team will be happy to assist you with your enquiry.

Consent Form: DNA Quality Assurance Register

Consent form for the DNA Quality Assurance Register

- I acknowledge I have read, or had read to me, the Quality Assurance Register Information Sheet (pages 1-3 of this document).
- I acknowledge that I understand the information provided, the general purpose and possible consequences of providing a sample for the Quality Assurance Register.
- I acknowledge I am aware that the provision of a reference sample is optional.

I consent to:

- My DNA reference profile being compared to DNA profiles generated from forensic exhibits at the NSW Forensic & Analytical Science Service,
- My DNA reference profile being compared to DNA profiles generated from environmental monitoring samples, and
- Storage of my original sample, which may be re-analysed in order to generate an updated DNA profile if new DNA systems are introduced.

Name _____ Date of Birth _____ Sex _____

Occupation _____

Organisation of employment _____

Contact phone number _____

Signature of individual _____ Date _____

Signature of witness (to the taking of the sample) _____ Date _____

Name of witness _____ Date _____