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COST OF LIVING AND ECONOMICS COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr LP Power MP—Chair
Mr RA Stevens MP
Ms AJ Camm MP
Mr MJ Crandon MP
Mrs MF McMahon MP
Mrs JC Gilbert MP

Staff present:

Ms K Longworth—Committee Secretary
Ms M Salisbury—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE QUEENSLAND AUDIT OFFICE

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 29 April 2024

Brisbane

MONDAY, 29 APRIL 2024

The committee met at 11.00 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this public hearing open. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we participate in this meeting today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are extraordinarily fortunate that we live in a country with two of the oldest continuous cultures in those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. My name is Linus Power. I am the member for Logan and chair of the committee. Other members of the committee are: Mr Ray Stevens, member for Mermaid Beach and deputy chair; Ms Amanda Camm, the member for Whitsunday; Mr Michael Crandon, the member for Coomera; Mrs Melissa McMahon, the member for Macalister; and Mrs Julieanne Gilbert, the member for Mackay, who is substituting for Ms Jess Pugh, the member for Mount Ommaney.

The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its report into the strategic review of the Queensland Audit Office. The hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. While the hearing is open to the public to watch, only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. The proceedings, of course, are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. I also remind those present that you may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings. Images may also appear on the parliament's website and social media pages. Before we proceed, please ensure any mobile phones are switched off or are in silent mode—which is a reminder to myself as well.

FLEMMING, Mr Patrick, Assistant Auditor-General, Queensland Audit Office

WORRALL, Mr Brendan, Auditor-General, Queensland Audit Office

CHAIR: I now welcome from the Queensland Audit Office, Mr Brendan Worrall, Auditor-General, and Mr Pat Flemming, the Assistant Auditor-General. Good morning and thank you for being here today. Would you like to make an opening statement before we start with any questions?

Mr Worrall: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on the inquiry into the strategic review of the Queensland Audit Office. I do appreciate the committee's bringing forward this hearing to accommodate my commitments with the Australasian Council of Auditors-General. Given today's hearing is before the closing date for submissions, I do not presently plan to make a separate submission. However, if there is anything the committee would like additional information on, I would be happy to make a formal submission. Further, if the committee has questions arising from submissions received for this inquiry, we would be happy to provide further information at the public hearing on 20 May.

We welcome this independent evaluation of our organisation. External reviews are an important part of our governance and accountability framework. They provide an independent performance assessment of our organisation and hold us accountable to parliament for how we discharge our mandate and help us improve our services. I thank Professor Ian O'Connor and the review team from Moore Australia Audit for their timely, thorough and professional review. We value their insights into QAO's operations. This review examined QAO's operations and performance since the 2017 strategic review, which covers most of my term as Auditor-General. I have been privileged to lead QAO for almost seven years and I am immensely proud that the reviewers concluded that: QAO has navigated recent challenges and served the state well; Queensland gets good value from its investment in QAO; and QAO's functions are performed economically, effectively and efficiently. I would also like to thank QAO staff, our service providers and clients as well as this committee for contributing to the result and for sharing their experiences with the reviewers.

I am proud of the work my office did to address the recommendations from the 2017 review and how well we navigated the challenges in recent years. I recognise that there are always opportunities for improvement within any organisation and thank the reviewers for highlighting these

areas. We are committed to ensuring QAO's services are valued, trusted and remain relevant to the ever-changing environment we operate in. We are working to address the recommendations made to QAO and will report our progress to QAO's independent audit and risk management committee and to this committee.

In March 2024, we actioned our first recommendation which was 8.4 a which was to write to this committee identifying the current acts which have provisions that are inconsistent with the Auditor-General's direction under the Auditor-General Act. Some recommendations will require a long term focus to be focused to be of full benefit beyond my term as Auditor-General. The review report, this committee's report and the government's subsequent response will be a helpful road map for QAO and my successor. I consider eight recommendations directed to the Queensland parliament and to this committee are as important as those made to QAO. I appreciate the reviewer's attention to the recommendations at various past reviews and Professor Peter Coaldrake made on enhancing QAO's independence.

As I have stated previously, I acknowledge that absolute independence of auditors-general is not realistic. We use public funds and must be subject to the same financial and performance accountability requirements that we ourselves help uphold. However, external reviews continue to find that the independence from executive government of the Queensland Auditor-General needs to be protected and further enhanced.

I note that many of the independence recommendations in chapter 8 of the report require legislative changes by the parliament. QAO would be happy to provide advice and support to the committee and executive government as you work through these recommendations. While I support each of these recommendations, if I were to prioritise I am particularly keen to see recommendation 8.5 regarding legal professional privilege addressed. Over the past 20 years, successive auditors-general have raised concerns about limitations and our audit legislation when seeking access to information subject to legal professional privilege. I sought support from the former premier and your committee in 2023 to address this matter by amending the Auditor-General Act in a way similar to the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I look forward to this recommendation being addressed.

Recommendation 8.9 is also important. It recommends repealing sections of the Auditor-General Act that allow sharing of information obtained by QAO during an audit with Queensland Treasury. These sections limit our independence. On recommendation 8.8 about the new budget process, you may recall I wrote to the former premier in 2023 expressing my concern with proposed amendments in the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I consider the amendments fell short of best practice by not shifting the existing responsibilities of the minister to the Speaker as recommended by Professor Coaldrake in his 2022 report *Let the Sunshine in*.

I welcome the increased involvement of this committee in the new process and we will work with you in implementing it. However, I believe opportunities still exist to further enhance this process. For example, the New South Wales government is moving to implement a new budget management model for integrity agencies that will enhance the independence of integrity agencies in that state. I note the reviewer's recommended this committee should review the process after two years and consider whether any aspects of the New South Wales model should be implemented in Queensland. If adopted in Queensland, the New South Wales budget model would better address the recommendations by Professor Coaldrake and better protect our independence by reducing the involvement of executive government in setting our budget. QAO is keen to work with the government in exploring this. I thank the committee for its thorough consideration of this report and we are happy to answer questions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Worrall. I appreciate your feedback.

Mr STEVENS: Thank you, Mr Worrall, for your term. I think you have done a wonderful job in leading the Audit Office. We wish you well for the future. In relation to this report from Professor O'Connor there was a strong recommendation that the usage of independent experts would assist in cost and also accuracy in terms of the reports. Do you have any comments in relation to 'the objectivity of independent experts, finding an independent expert even from overseas'—I think Mr O'Connor recommended—and do you believe that that would assist in your budgetary processes if independent experts were called in?

CHAIR: Just emphasising that that was to do with the use of independent experts giving extra background to the audit on performance audits.

Mr Worrall: Thank you for your comments and your question. I think we went back and had a look at all performance audits we have done since I have been Auditor-General. We have actually engaged external independents on 41 per cent of occasions. I think what Professor O'Connor was
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getting at was maybe some earlier engagement with experts in the planning stage of the audits. We have certainly taken that on board to adopt that, and we have no issues with that. I think that might help further refine scope at the start of the audit before we actually go off and do work. I can see where he is coming from in relation to making that recommendation.

CHAIR: If I could anticipate, deputy chair, you also asked about the independence—

Mr STEVENS: Of those experts—how we get them.

CHAIR: Just to fill you in, there was some previous discussion with Mr O'Connor about the 'independent' might come with a very strong policy prescription that has been part of their career for a significant time and whether that influence—

Mr STEVENS: That was Mr O'Connor's—

Mr Worrall: It is a good question. I think sometimes we have not only used one expert but canvassed multiple experts. A good example of that would be more recently when we did the audit on invasive species. We had a couple of case studies in there, and one was in relation to fire ants. There is probably not a lot of experts around in relation to fire ants. We probably spoke to most of the experts in this country, but they were not all of the same view. I guess that is another aspect to it. Sometimes you can get a variety of views. In choosing experts we would be cognisant of a person's reputation in the marketplace, their standing amongst their peers and things like that to try to avoid confirmation bias, which I guess is probably what you are getting at.

Mr STEVENS: Mr O'Connor mentioned that even you had to go overseas—I do not know anything about fire ants, for example—

Mr CRANDON: You will soon.

Mr STEVENS: There must have been—

Mr CRANDON: Coming your way.

CHAIR: Order!

Mr STEVENS:—There must be fire ants in other parts of the world to know how terrible they are before we got them. Is that too great an expense for the Audit Office to consider?

Mr Worrall: I do not think it is. When we did the audit on mine lung disease, which was some years ago, we had a number of experts that we used on that audit. I think there were experts—I am going from memory—from Monash University, but I am pretty sure there was an offshore expert who had particular expertise in examining the X-rays from the people affected. I would say yes.

Mr STEVENS: If you have to, you will.

Mr Worrall: If you have to, you will. You just need to be able to find these people and do some due diligence around their standing amongst their peers.

CHAIR: I just want to build on that question. With performance audits there is obviously a limit on independence by statute in that the performance audit is to audit the policy without—what does the act actually say?

Mr Worrall: The basis of a performance audit is really to see that a function of government delivery has been performed economically, efficiently and effectively.

CHAIR: Without examining the policy itself?

Mr Worrall: Yes, without commenting on the merits of the government policy.

CHAIR: Obviously, those quite strong limitations are engrained within the Auditor-General's office. Would outside experts need to be briefed on that basis? For instance, Mr O'Connor asked whether we should bring in outside experts early to set up the structure. That could be influenced by their view of what is the optimal policy or otherwise. Do they need to be briefed on the section of the act and how that should inform the structure of the performance audit?

Mr Worrall: I think that would be good practice, yes, because we would not be commenting on policy but we might be commenting on how policy has been implemented or not implemented, if you know what I mean, but not on the policy choices per se.

CHAIR: From an outside expert's point of view, that would be an unusual limitation that they might see as quite constraining in their field of knowledge but it is part of the act.

Mr Worrall: Yes. They are our expert and not our consultant, if that makes sense.

CHAIR: Understood.

Mr Worrall: We are not engaging them as a consultant per se. They would be working under our direction ultimately.

CHAIR: Did you want to add to that, Mr Flemming?

Mr Flemming: I think the experts give us an understanding of the subject matter as opposed to the audit execution. In terms of audit execution, we are experts in understanding our mandate, we are experts in designing the criteria and things to assess, but they help us to understand the subject matter of what is going on. That is why it is helpful in some cases to have a panel of experts with different opinions to try to understand the nuances of different subject matter.

Mr CRANDON: In relation to staffing, recommendation 6.3 states, 'QAO explore the opportunity to formalise its arrangements with its peak workforce to enable better long-term resourcing planning for peak audit periods' such as 'offering a cohort of contractors the guarantee of multiyear appointments for the relevant periods'. If you provide certainty to those outside audit organisations, does that then provide an opportunity for certainty in relation to cost? In other words, if you are providing a three-year contract—just picking that term—are you likely to get a better deal rather than just bringing them in on an ad hoc basis each year?

Mr Worrall: I would say potentially, because over that three-year period you can offer a lot more hours than you can on a year-by-year basis. I would say that the way that the labour market is these days, people would be reluctant to be too locked in to a fixed price three years out, if you know what I mean.

Mr CRANDON: Sure.

Mr Worrall: I think, don't be looking for something worded that was more akin to factoring in cost-of-living rises in the Brisbane market or something like that so that they are not tied down to a number today that might be behind the market in two or three years time.

Mr CRANDON: Further on that, even under those circumstances, I would imagine that would provide you with more certainty in relation to your own budgetary needs going forward as an audit office. Is there some certainty there? Do you see any downside to that recommendation?

Mr Worrall: There is some relative certainty to how many hours we will need from year to year, but that is not set in stone so that can vary from year to year; like, how many hours it takes us to execute the audits because public sector entities actually come and go. There might be some new ones, there might be some that are no longer entities so that is not always stable. Sometimes entities are doing things that require more audit effort. There might be a transaction or some major capital projects or things like that. That requires more audit effort. It is not completely a level playing field from year to year.

The other thing we have at our disposal is that we do not do all the work ourselves. In relation to financial audits, we use service providers for about a third of those audits. We can play with that mix a little bit. Having contractors for three years would provide more certainty in terms of their availability. If I think about the providers we have used, up until maybe pre-2021 we pretty much had a fairly stable contracting workforce. When I say 'contracting', I mean people who would actually come to QAO and work under our day-to-day guidance. That was quite stable. Everything changed from 2021 with the way that the labour market moved in relation to auditing. It has really seen a lot of movement of people, not just in and out of the QAO but also in the profession generally. With the way that costs have risen, in effect from 2021 we have been somewhat under siege, I would say, in relation to our resourcing. Our staff are very attractive. They are well educated and they are well trained in auditing but also have other skills. In some ways, we have been seen as attractive as well.

Mr CRANDON: So you support the recommendation?

Mr Worrall: Yes. I support all the recommendations.

CHAIR: Building on that, did your office and also other auditors-general offices examine the privileged information that outside contractors have and oversight over government plans and policies post the allegations about the corporation tax plans that an outside consultant helped draft and allegedly then helped other customers to avoid? Is that bringing concerns about the role of contractors? As the oversight committee, should we have concerns about that as well?

Mr Worrall: I will start answering that by describing the framework that we have. Obviously, the Auditor-General Act requires confidentiality in relation to the information we acquire in relation to doing audits. That applies to all of our service providers. It would apply to all of our contractors. With our service providers, we formally enter into contracts that would cover individual audits. We are entering into contracts with the firm and also with the lead partner to deliver those audits. Since this

matter arose, I have written to all of those service providers to reinforce their obligations in relation to confidentiality of any information that they may glean from audits that they are doing on our behalf. Another important aspect is their security of information, not just keeping it private but also keeping it secure. We have a framework around that.

We only have a limited number of providers. We only want to deal with ones who deliver quality work and also have sufficient infrastructure to ensure confidentiality of information that they acquire. As part of our quality framework, we obviously do reviews at the audit engagement level and we also do what I would call firm reviews around quality. We also ask them to provide any quality reviews that have been undertaken by other regulators such as ASIC. In relation to contractors who are working directly for us, again, they would enter into a contract with us and, again, we would reinforce the confidentiality requirements.

CHAIR: Obviously the Auditor-General Act provides a sort of stopgap. On those contractual obligations that you enter into with the partner and the firm, I imagine the federal Treasury entered into similar types of contractual obligations when they did audits. There does remain a concern. Given this committee has oversight, what actions should we take to allay public concern around those sorts of issues?

Mr Worrall: We would be happy to provide more information around that. If you would like me to, I can write to you and at least formalise what I have basically said.

CHAIR: Treasury would have had similar contractual undertakings from the firm and the partners involved at that stage, I am assuming. It might be subject to legal things, but as a general principle.

Mr Worrall: That firm that you are referring to, and we have not named it, I terminated all contracts with them back in 2022 I think it was or was it 2023? It was about 12 months ago. We had a number of contracts with them where they were doing external audits. They were all in the local government space, from memory. I terminated all contracts and went to the market to find other providers.

Mr STEVENS: Following up on that, I think it was a whistleblower who identified the problem, otherwise it would have gone unnoticed. That is the concern. You are not always going to get a whistleblower. I am thinking outside the square: should there be some sort of criminal process attached to legislation, perhaps, that may involve a bigger deterrent, if you like, rather than just all the confirmations that you have received and probably the federal Treasurer received as well?

CHAIR: In this case, it was not just 'water-cooler conversations'. Allegedly, it was a much more organised sharing of information. You do wonder whether, without a whistleblower, without someone bravely coming forward, that is something that the government should continue to be concerned about. Is that the essence of it?

Mr STEVENS: Yes.

CHAIR: Is it something that we should be concerned about? The deputy chair suggested the possibility of legislation.

Mr Worrall: I will say one thing and I think Patrick wants to say something. The other thing is that, when we are going to the market to appoint service providers, like other firms, to do work on our behalf, really three parties need to be on board before those firms are appointed. We need to be satisfied ourselves with the quality that they have put forward and that the pricing is right. The audit entity themselves also needs to be comfortable with the service providers. I guess, if they were not feeling comfortable then they would tell us before we actually entered into a contract. Those contracts can be extended but, before any extension is given by us, we would make sure that the entity itself is also comfortable that they are delivering and that there are no concerns about the integrity of the provider.

Mr Flemming: I would add that there is already an inbuilt protection within the Auditor-General Act. Section 53 of the act binds QAO employees, contractors we would get in and the service providers we use. They are all subject to section 53. If they breach that then there are some penalties. Up to a year imprisonment is the maximum that sits under there. Therefore, there is something built into the act already. Brendan mentioned that we wrote to all the service providers post this incident and we reinforced those requirements, as well, under section 53.

Mr Worrall: Under section 53 they are regarded as authorised auditors. I think that is the terminology in the act. As Patrick said, they could be QAO employees, they could be contractors working directly under our day-to-day supervision or they could be firms. They are all regarded as authorised auditors.

CHAIR: Just on those exceptions to legal and professional privilege, outside auditors would also have access to some of that information that various parliaments have had reluctance to extend? Would that be the case?

Mr Worrall: If they are doing an audit, they need to gather audit evidence to be satisfied that they have sufficient evidence over the subject matter, whatever that is, and we would support them in that.

Ms CAMM: Mr Worrall, I have a question around the self-assessment follow-up on audits. It is around recommendation 5.9 and in particular that the Audit Office should increase the number of follow-ups, particularly around the high or significant risk recommendations. My question was whether the Audit Office has adequate resourcing to undertake that if it was to embark upon that now or whether that would require either greater resourcing, or would it take you away from pending audits or reviews to be able to do that in light of that recommendation?

Mr Worrall: We are about a \$50 million business and about \$43 million of that is generated in our fee-for-service type environment for our financial and compliance audits. The other \$7 million is provided by parliament, and that is to fund a number of things. It funds all of our reports to parliament, both the results of financial audits but also any other reports we do. It also funds the performance audits, it also funds any investigations we do and it also funds the Auditor-General's remuneration. That allows us at the moment to do about 10 new performance audits a year on average and about one follow-up audit per year on average. If we were to increase the number of follow-up audits then, yes, we would need to increase funding because we would need more resources to be able to do that.

Ms CAMM: As a follow-up question, do you see particular areas where there may have been a certain level of risk or threshold in those recommendations that you see value in for some of those follow-up audits in your experience, particularly where it might be pertinent to the benefit of government risk or departmental risk?

Mr Worrall: If you look at the follow-up audits that we have performed, I think largely they would speak for themselves that there is value in doing the follow-up audit. Sometimes we have gone back and recommendations have not been implemented as well as they could have or maybe the landscape has changed a little bit and maybe some of those recommendations are no longer relevant but maybe there needs to be new focus elsewhere, so sometimes when we have done follow-up audits we have actually called them a follow-on audit—that is, we have gone back and looked at the status of the recommendation that we made, but the landscape might have changed so we might have some other elements that we are now auditing as well. I would say that there has definitely been benefit when we have done those sorts of things.

Mrs GILBERT: With the signing off of the CaseWare files, I did note in the report that the process of signing off on reports was not always followed, and there are recommendations—5.1 and 5.2. Do you believe that those recommendations are strong enough to make sure that process is followed so that we do not have instances where reports are tabled in parliament when they are signed off at a later date or there have been changes made to them after the signing off of those reports?

Mr Flemming: One of the key things to take from this time period that the reviewers were looking at is that we actually changed our system from an old thing we called ASPIRE to a new CaseWare system, so some of the files they were looking at were the first time teams were reviewing some of these things. When they are talking about the sign-off, there are a dozen procedures that certain people have to sign off. On this occasion everything was signed off and everything was reviewed but not every one of those was signed off by all of the key people who were required to do it. Again, it was a teething problem with the transfer. We certainly believe that with additional training in some of those things that will not be a problem. Our internal quality reviews will focus on that aspect to make sure that it is happening. It is the same with the central repository in terms of making sure that all information then comes across and is in the file at the right times. Again, it is more of a training exercise which we are certainly working on.

Mr Worrall: I might just add something, if I may. You mentioned CaseWare. CaseWare is our toolkit for both financial audits and performance audits. You also made a comment about going back and adding stuff to the file after we might have made a report or issued an audit opinion. We would not be doing that. CaseWare has an automatic lockdown function where the file will actually lock down and so you cannot actually add any more audit evidence. If you want to add more audit evidence in, I would say, the very rare circumstance that you need to, there is a whole complete trail where you

have to reopen the file and you have to document why you are going back and adding any new or additional evidence. The file will automatically lock down after so many days, I think it is. It does not even require action; it will just lock itself down.

CHAIR: That is certainly very different from our resident accountant who used to do this in big books with lined paper.

Mr STEVENS: And a green pen.

CHAIR: And a green pen.

Mr CRANDON: When we had the briefing from Professor O'Connor about this matter with the Audit Office we canvassed the term of appointment for the Auditor-General. I was at the ACPAC conference in Perth last week and took the opportunity to canvass all of the Auditors-General as to their views on terms et cetera, including yourself. The response was mixed, but it leaned towards longer term appointments. For example, the federal Auditor-General is a 10-year term and certainly had a very strong opinion in that regard. Given that you are entering the last few months of your appointment—so you have done your time, so to speak, of seven years—but also being aware that if an appointment was made for, say, 10 years that does not mean that you as the Auditor-General are locked in for 10 years such as if you decided you wanted to retire early or move to another jurisdiction, which has happened with previous Auditors-General here, and given that we are now in four-year terms as a parliament, could you give us your views on where the term needs to lie?

CHAIR: And I guess whether a fixed or renewable as well is probably—

Mr CRANDON: And fixed or renewable as in Victoria—two lots of seven years, as we discovered.

Mr Worrall: Thanks for the question; I will try to answer all of it. In terms of fixed term or add-on terms, my view is that it should be fixed—absolutely fixed—and there should be no provision for extension. I think that is not appropriate. You could have a bad actor who sort of plays to that, so I am definitely not for extensions. I think it should be fixed. In terms of what is the right number, you are quite right: there is a variety of numbers around the country. There is a couple of sevens, there is a couple of eights, there is a couple of 10s. I think the Northern Territory has a five-year term but allows for a second period, and then you have Victoria where they have a seven-plus situation. South Australia, up until last year, had a 65-year-old age limit on the Auditor-General, so the last Auditor-General retired at age 65. They have now changed their legislation to be more akin to Victoria where you have an add-on, which, again, I do not really agree with.

Whether it is seven, eight or 10, my personal view probably does not really matter. You have mentioned the Commonwealth has a 10-year term. The Auditor-General has retired two to 2½ years shy of that 10-year term, so maybe 10 years is a bit of a stretch. There is an individual perspective and an entity perspective. I think seven years is quite a term as an individual. From an organisational perspective, I think you would want to start seeing renewal somewhere between that seven, eight or nine years. I think 10 is maybe getting a little bit long. That would be my personal view.

You also mentioned the election cycles. You are never going to be able to fully plan that anyway because an Auditor-General will see out their term. There is no guarantee that the replacement will be there on day one. I certainly was not; I think there was an acting arrangement for 12 months since my predecessor. If you are trying to somehow cover more than two election cycles, I can see that disrupting that as well. I think I would say about seven years. It actually equates to the Corporations Act, so if you are an auditor partner, which I was, you can only audit that entity for seven years and you are forced to rotate off. I think there is some logic in seven years. That would be my view.

Mr CRANDON: And logic in 10 as well, from the sounds?

Mr Worrall: Yes—

Mr CRANDON: Given that they can retire—sorry, I did not mean to cut across what you were about to say—but given that you can retire, as you pointed out. You can retire early if you choose, or move on to another jurisdiction early if you choose.

Mr Worrall: Yes. I just say 10 years is starting to get at the tail end of organisational renewal. There is probably need for a change after 10 years.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you.

Mr STEVENS: Just on that, as I understand it, some of the major firms now are insisting the partnerships finish up at around 60 and they have to move on. Does that create an opportunity, if you like, for a pool of retired or moved on—whatever you like to call it—auditors to fill the role for that seven- to 10-year period?

Mr Worrall: I guess potentially. I think some of those partnership deeds might even be less than that. I have heard of one of 58 or 59.

Mr STEVENS: Is that right?

Mr Worrall: Yes.

CHAIR: Wow; unusual. There being no further questions, we thank you very much for being here today and for the information you have provided and the discussion we have had. Thank you of course to our Hansard reporters and the broadcast staff for their assistance. A transcript of the proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary webpage in due course. I note that there were no questions taken on notice. With that, I declare this public briefing closed. Thank you very much.

Mr Worrall: Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 11.42 am.