ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Members present:
Mr LP Power MP—Chair
Mr MJ Crandon MP
Mrs MF McMahon MP
Mr DG Purdie MP
Mr A Tantari MP

Staff present:
Ms J Langford—Committee Secretary
Ms M Salisbury—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—QUEENSLAND AUDITOR-GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT AND REPORTS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2022

Brisbane

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The committee met at 11.33 am.

CHAIR: I welcome you to the public briefing for the committee's oversight of the Auditor-General. This is a proceeding of parliament and, although no-one is on oath, we are under the rules of the parliament.

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

REARDON, Ms Michelle, Assistant Auditor-General, Queensland Audit Office

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

CHAIR: I invite the Auditor-General to give a brief opening statement before we begin and then there might be some questions for you.

Mr Worrall: Good morning. I am pleased to brief the committee today on the Auditor-General's office annual report for 2021-22 and five of my reports to parliament over the last year. Reflecting firstly on our annual report, thanks to the work of our clients and workforce we continued to deliver on our vision for better public services. We tabled 19 reports to parliament containing 77 recommendations on how public sector entities and local governments can improve their performance. Since July we have tabled another six reports and I expect to table three more before the end of the year. We also continued to report to parliament on entities' self-reported progress implementing our recommendations. I tabled my second report on these assessments and a result of insights last month.

As external events continue to challenge Queensland, QAO adapted to provide audit services across the state. A key part of working efficiently has been embracing technologies, including making better use of data analytic tools to enable greater insights. Financially in 2021-22 our revenue and expenses tracked well against budget. We delivered most of our audit work as planned, with little impact on our overall position. Our revenue was slightly over budget due to some additional work on our audits following machinery-of-government changes.

Engaging directly with clients is a key for understanding the unique environments we operate in and to receive feedback on our services. Last financial year I held 110 meetings with public sector entities and local governments across the state. Last November I was pleased to host QAO's first event for the members and secretariat of parliamentary committees. I hope that you and other attendees found the forum valuable and I look forward to welcoming all the committees to QAO again next year.

Now I would like to focus on the five reports to parliament being examined today. I do not intend to cover each report in detail, but instead I will focus on the main themes. These reports demonstrate our unique ability to provide insights from our work across the public sector. They cover the audits of the 229 Queensland state government entities, including 21 core government departments; board recruitment processes for 50 large government entities; the process for establishing the Queensland Future Fund and key elements of its structure; the strengths and weaknesses of internal controls by departments managing grant programs; and whether the Queensland government COVID-19 economic response and recovery initiatives were designed and managed effectively.

Across our work I repeatedly found and continue to find that entities need to strengthen their governance and oversight arrangements. Good government promotes accountability, integrity and transparency. I can help entities to continuously improve, innovate and achieve their objectives. I will continue to focus our audits on this important aspect of delivering better public services for Queenslanders.

One key learning from the reports was that the entities need to be accountable, transparent and neutral when making decisions around distributing funding while achieving value for money. This means that entities must have effective internal controls to get the maximum benefit from the funding they award. Local communities need to be able to see where the funding is going and entities need to publish clear information about grants and COVID-19 initiatives. The importance of the communities' and the decision-makers' access to timely information is also part of my recommendations to departments and their ministers. They should explore opportunities for more timely release of financial statements of public sector entities.

For many years we have seen evidence of challenges arising from or exacerbated by machinery-of-government changes. A lack of integration can restrict entities from having a complete view of performance and present barriers to the timely sharing of information. In my *State entities 2021* report I recommended that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Queensland Treasury provide advice to the government on the potential impacts of restructures, including the key risks to be managed and the estimated costs to implement restructure changes.

Entities also need performance measures when establishing programs, including early alerts where programs are at risk of not achieving targets. These measures will help entities understand how effective initiatives are, what decisions need to be made about future funding allocation and whether programs should be modified or even discontinued.

I hope that my reports to parliament are a catalyst for positive change and that entities recognise the value of our audits and act on our recommendations—not just those in the report but also the ones we make directly during the conduct of our audit work. I appreciate the committee's support of QAO and the interest you take in our reports and we are happy to answer questions that you may have. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. I was remiss before in not respectfully acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Yuggera-speaking peoples. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures. I also wanted to introduce the members of the committee. I am Linus Power, the member for Logan and chair of the committee. Unfortunately, our deputy chair, Mr Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach, cannot be with us, but we do have Mr Michael Crandon, the member for Coomera; Mr Dan Purdie, the member for Ninderry; and Mr Adrian Tantari, the member for Hervey Bay; and we will be shortly joined by Melissa McMahon, the member for Macalister.

The information that the Auditor-General is giving us is factual and technical information. Seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate in the House. I also note that we are being broadcast and that filming and photographing may take place. With that I might turn to questions.

Mr CRANDON: Thank you, Mr Worrall, for your opening comments. You mentioned machinery-of-government changes and some impacts in that regard. Stepping back from that, could you give us an overview on your thoughts on the audit committees and how they are working through the various departments? Secondly, what impact do machinery-of-government changes have on their effectiveness?

Mr Worrall: I actually did a performance audit on the effectiveness of audit committees in government departments. I think I did that sometime in the last two years—early last year, I think it was. What we found in that report is that the audit committees probably were not as effective as they could be. There was a series of recommendations that I made to the Under Treasurer, I think it was. The Under Treasurer issues guidelines on how the audit committees should conduct themselves.

One of my main recommendations was that the audit committees in the departments were not really independent. They were largely dominated by management. While they may have had independent chairs and some independent members, there was a majority of management on the committee. I definitely struggle with that concept, given that one of the functions of the committee in the context of the departments is really to assist the director-general to hold management to account around governance—around recommendations that may have come from internal audit, external audit, maybe other assurance providers. I struggle with that concept that they are not fully independent. I definitely had a recommendation around that. Thinking back about that, I think some of the remuneration of the committees was pretty piecemeal given the time and effort that they would put into it. These are independent members.

The date for the implementation of those recommendations was maybe early this year, but the Under Treasurer sought an extension to 31 December in relation to updating those guidelines. I anticipate that those guidelines will be updated and out before Christmas. Then we will be able to see where those recommendations have landed.

Beyond departments, I have a planned audit next year in relation to the effectiveness of audit committees in local government, so I will be able to update the committee after that in terms of their effectiveness. That report I did last year on departments also touched on statutory bodies. I pretty much found their audit committees to be operating effectively. They were pretty much a subcommittee of their independent boards, so a different sort of structure to the departments.

Coming back to the second part of your question in terms of the impact of machinery-of-government changes, I think audit committees are probably just one thing that is potentially impacted by machinery-of-government changes, because suddenly the landscape and the control involvement and the governance environment that they are overseeing may have changed quite significantly. That puts a lot of pressure on audit committees to quickly try to regroup and understand what are the implications of the machinery-of-government change that may have impacted that department in terms of governance and internal control but also personalities—because people can move—systems and cyber risk. It actually creates a lot of work for audit committees over the short to medium term, I think, to really get a handle on what are some of those changes so they can advise directors-general about things that may still need to happen to manage the risks of machinery-of-government changes.

Mr CRANDON: Turning now to establishing the Queensland Future Fund, what percentage of the titles registry is held within the Debt Retirement Fund?

Mr Worrall: I think 75 per cent is held within the Debt Retirement Fund.

Mr CRANDON: I note your calls to government to provide financial statements for the Queensland Future Fund. Queensland Treasury's annual report lists the various asset types held in the Debt Retirement Fund, being equities, infrastructure et cetera. We know from that report that the return for the 2021-22 financial year was 0.29 per cent. Does Treasury provide you any visibility regarding the performance of individual assets held within the fund, despite them not providing the information publicly?

Mr Worrall: The basis for our recommendation is really to accumulate this information in the one spot. At the moment it is not readily digestible because it is in a number of financial reports—the Treasury department, Queensland Treasury Holdings, QTC and QIC, where some of the funds actually reside. The information is there but it is not in a digestible place at the moment. That is really the basis for the recommendation.

CHAIR: Is that what you were after, member for Coomera?

Mr CRANDON: Chair, I have two other questions in relation to that specific topic. Do you want me to continue with those?

CHAIR: I am happy for you to continue. I just wondered whether that answered your question.

Mr CRANDON: Yes, I think he has done that.

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, I am happy for you to continue.

Mr CRANDON: Credit rating agency S&P stated in their most recent report on the Future Fund that they deduct a haircut amount from the value of the fund in their considerations due to their concerns with the liquidity of these assets. In light of their findings, do you have any concerns regarding the valuation of any assets held within the Future Fund—for example, the titles registry?

Mr Worrall: Liquidity is really about quickly transferring those assets into cash or something near cash. I think you will find mentioned in the report somewhere that they actually did quickly liquefy a quarter of a billion dollars—I forget the exact amount—worth of those assets at the start of it. The valuation is not necessarily directly related to liquidity. In all respects, I think they are slightly different things. In terms of the valuation, there were certainly no issues in relation to the valuation in the most recent financial reports of these entities.

CHAIR: Just to clarify, for things like the titles office, its liquidity or otherwise is actually a matter of state government policy to ensure it is held in public ownership, so therefore perhaps by definition it is not something that could be made liquid by a decision of policy. That is actually part of the underlying structure of those assets.

Mr Flemming: Just to go to the valuation, at the start, when all of this went into the fund, obviously there are differences between the titles registry in Queensland versus other registries. One of the ways the valuation is determined is based on the types of revenue the titles office collects. In Queensland there are two ways. There are some flat fee rates and there are also some rates that increase based on the valuation of the property. For example, if you went to the titles registry website and you sold a property for $180,000, that would be a flat fee of about $200. If you sold a property for $280,000, that would go up to $600 or thereabouts and it would keep going. That is the difference in the cash flows of the titles registry in itself. The valuation is a by-product of the cash flows that come in and how long the lease period is, which in this case is 50 years, which is different to some of the other states in how they have constructed that. That is in terms of the initial valuation.

Mr CRANDON: If there is a difference between the two, are you satisfied with the methodology that is used for the valuation of those assets?

Mr Flemming: We audit the trust that is held by QTC. We audit those accounts. They are not publicly available but we do report on the audit of that in our *State entities* report. It is one of the items that is listed in the appendix. We audit QIC's books, QTC's books, Treasury's books and the overall state of Queensland. We found that to be appropriate in all cases. There were independent valuations obtained that we looked at as part of those various audits, and we did not find any issues with those.

Mr CRANDON: That is all I have on that subject.

Mr TANTARI: Mr Worrall, since the QAO's last strategic review in 2017, I note that 28 of the review's 32 recommendations have been implemented—I think that is a pretty good strike rate—and I understand that four are reliant on extended stakeholder actions. I also note that there is one outstanding recommendation for the QAO to action, which is to develop a better practice resource for valuing public infrastructure, which is reliant on a draft guide on the same subject by the Australian Accounting Standards Board. Do you have any idea when that draft guide may be completed?

Mr Worrall: That has been a bit of a saga, which is the way I would describe it. When I walked into the role, we had that guide out on draft. The then chair of the Australian Accounting Standards Board came and met with me and indicated that they were going to work with public sector entities to develop more guidance to the Australian Accounting Standards. The one we are really talking about is the fair value standard, which is how to value assets and liabilities at fair value. While a lot of their guidance fitted for-profit type entities, there was not really guidance around how those things would be applied to public sector entities that are largely not for profit and there is some sort of public good around these assets. That is where the saga started for me.

Five years down the track, we are just about there. I think the AASB is just about to update that fair value standard with some more local guidance particularly directed at the public sector agencies. The feedback we are getting is that it will largely take care of some of the concerns we have had about the lack of guidance out there. Once that standard is updated, I will need to make a decision about what I do with that draft guide—whether it is still required or whether I just issue it as guidance to auditors as opposed to guidance to preparers. I will make that call once we see the final published version of the standard, which I understand is only weeks away.

Mr PURDIE: In relation to report No. 17 and the appointing and renewing of government boards, what were the most prevalent types of conflicts of interest that you found—without delving into any particular cases?

Mr Worrall: I would need to take that on notice. We would need to go back and understand what those conflicts were.

Mr PURDIE: I would hate to burden you with that so if you could just talk broadly, was it political or corporate? What sorts of conflicts were they, just in general?

Mr Worrall: I think a lot of them would be to do with relationships in that they may have worked with somebody in the past or they may have a relative who works for an organisation. I think that would be the most common form of conflict.

Actually, I have some more information here. As part of that audit, we did not have access to individual people's declarations because I think there were privacy issues around that. These were people who may have been appointed to boards or wanting to go through an appointment process. There was, however, evidence that departments had considered the recommended candidates with declared conflicts after they had determined that the conflicts could be managed and did not pose any threats to the candidate's ability to fulfil their responsibilities on the boards. What that is saying is that just because there is a conflict it does not mean somebody cannot go there; it just means that everybody needs to be aware of the conflict and you can put in place safeguards to manage around that conflict.

Recommendation No. 2 of our report was that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, in collaboration with Treasury and relevant departments, develop a whole-of-government overarching framework, including providing advice to boards on how to determine if a member's long-term tenure has affected their independence—that is what we would call a familiarity threat—and involved board chairs more closely in the appointment and renewal process to allow candidates to discuss potential conflicts of interest and determine if they can be managed successfully or not.

Mr PURDIE: Are you happy with the safeguards and the management around those conflicts?

Mr Worrall: I think I would be happier if there were more guidance from Treasury that actually says that board chairs need to be involved around whether there is a conflict or not. If you think about it, it is the board chairs who would have the most knowledge about what is happening in a particular business at a point in time. There may be some things happening that are not necessarily in the public domain so there might be some potential conflicts down the track. If that step happened and there was an engagement with the board chair around potential conflicts, I think that would be fine—and if those discussions were documented and decisions were made, and if any safeguards that needed to be applied were documented and followed.

CHAIR: I want to take you back to first principles of the role. Obviously, the Auditor-General is not elected by the people of Queensland and has a statutory role. In that way, would it be fair to say that the role of the Auditor-General is to ensure that the objectives of governments are fulfilled efficiently and expeditiously and that money is not misspent in the fulfilment of those objectives? Is that a fair way to characterise it, and would you like to add to that?

Mr Worrall: I can talk directly to that. My mandate as Auditor-General—which is quite consistent with mandates in other jurisdictions—is to be parliament's auditor, so to audit the financial statements of every public sector entity. As part of that, I have a mandate to do performance audits—and this is really to the heart of your question—and that mandate says in the act to audit aspects of public administration to see that they are operating with efficiency, effectiveness and economy. They are the words out of the act, which are very much like the words you mentioned, Chair.

CHAIR: Sometimes public policy means that a government takes expenditure in order to head off or prevent a public policy situation that might not happen. For instance, we had a public policy where in North Queensland we built a series of shelters for storm events. They had dual use but they were a significant cost. In that way, it was the stated objective of the government to provide that shelter. However, the shelter—knock on wood, or God willing—had not been overly used because we had not had those more dramatic cyclonic events. How do you as an auditor judge whether that is efficacious policy in the delivery of a public policy goal?

Mr Worrall: If that was the stated objective, that it was there for emergency shelter, how I would approach that would be looking at the process, those government entities that were involved in actually procuring the land and constructing whatever was constructed and the ongoing management of that. They are the things I would be looking at. While it may have a primary use, maybe there are some secondary uses as well. Looking at procurement, constructing and ongoing management of that would be my primary focus.

CHAIR: In that way, things like climate change and insurance things that government takes actions to protect or secure or ensure community has confidence in—you have the relatively narrow view of just seeing that the objective of the government is delivered in the way that is most efficient and as stated by the relevant department?

Mr Worrall: My act is quite clear. It says that I cannot comment on the merits of government policy, but I can certainly comment on the implementation of government policy.

CHAIR: The point is that in a broader discussion in the media is the idea of the independent statutory office as some kind of freewheeling entity. There is a very narrow statutory framework in which your office works that is very important to the structure of government but necessarily narrowed by the structure of the statute that governs you?

Mr Worrall: Again I come back to what the legislation says: I cannot comment on the merits of government policy but I can certainly comment on the way government policy is implemented, particularly around efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

CHAIR: I am not making any note or critique. I think you do that in an exemplary fashion. I just wanted to get it stated on the record, because there seems to be a creeping change in the way statutory offices are viewed outside—that they have a much broader role in some of the things we have dealt with.

Mr CRANDON: On the appointment and renewing of government boards and the board positions you raised in the report which have been sitting vacant for up to two years, have you received any updates from the government as to whether those positions have been filled?

CHAIR: Which report are we talking about there?

Mr CRANDON: That is the appointing and renewing of government boards—17.

Mr Worrall: Probably not directly, but some of those probably have been updated, which we would have realised through our own audit activities. I guess the point I was making in that report was that some of the entities or some of the boards were struggling to get timely renewal of their board members. I knew, even before I did that audit, that one or two boards had actually expired and did not have a quorum anymore. One of those—this is maybe three or four years ago—was the Gladstone Area Water Board. They suddenly did not have a quorum, and because they did not have a quorum they could not approve their annual financial statements—back in 2019 or something like that. That was really the point I was trying to make there.

Earlier you asked a question about the liquidity of the Debt Retirement Fund. I can circle back to that. We did make comment in that report, report No. 11. On page 7 I noted that several key transactions occurred after assets were contributed to the fund. In May 2021 a portion of the Aurizon shares were sold on the Stock Exchange. This was completed as part of usual trading investments. On the same day, the Queensland titles registry operation was transferred to the Debt Retirement Fund and $2.1 billion was borrowed. That was the point I was trying to make: they actually increased their liquidity by borrowing that money. This occurred in a company within the Queensland titles registry structure to provide liquidity to the fund and support the state's credit rating.

The third thing that happened was: the Debt Retirement Fund transferred part of its ownership of the Queensland titles registry to other Queensland government funds and entities. In exchange it received more liquid investments from these entities. This meant that as at 30 June 2021 there were actually four owners of the Queensland titles registry, and this was shown in the report in figure 2E. The long-term assets held 41 per cent of the titles registry, the Debt Retirement Fund held 22 per cent, the Housing Investment Fund, the Path to Treaty Fund and the Carbon Reduction Investment Fund collectively held 34 per cent, and the National Injury Insurance Scheme held three per cent. I would recommend to you page 7 of the report that details that.

Mr TANTARI: One of the key achievements that you noted in your report was the implementation of electronic signing of financial statements. It is a very simple question, but it would be interesting to find out what were the implications of the achievement with regard to the implementation of electronic signing of financial statements. Have you seen any issues with its use? In your experience, what have been the key benefits of this simple change to clients in rural, regional and remote communities across Queensland?

Mr Worrall: Thank you for the question. When I started in the role five years ago, I was a bit taken aback that QAO was still issuing audit opinions manually because that was not my experience in public practice. I would issue probably less than five per cent of my opinions manually. Of course, if you think about the breadth of the state, that has many practical implications. There were things going backwards and forwards via mail. Some of those mail services would take several days to get to Brisbane or to get back to the destination, and this created some practical complications such as running the risk of not being signed within the statutory deadline. There was also an industry of photocopying things at QAO—photocopying financial statements and so on.

I guess one of the early things I said was that we needed to move to electronic signing of audit opinions. There was a particular director in the office who was tasked with that and who has since retired. She ran that project over a few months. It was not a long period of time. She did an excellent job. I say that in all honesty, because we implemented this Adobe signing software and it was a lot more sophisticated than what we had in public practice.

The way opinions are issued is that financial statements get workflowed to people within QAO to sign them, and I obviously sign my share of those. They just get workflowed to me in an email and then I can just work through a little checklist. Once I say okay, it will append my signature, which it already has stored in the software, and then a few minutes later I and other people within the office will get emailed a PDF version of the audited financial statements, which we can return to the entity the same day via email or actually through our portal that we have with them. It has completely streamlined that whole process. It was also one of the two steps that led us to being a paperless office. That was probably a key one, because that was really the last bastion of paper we had. All of our audits were pretty much paperless, but we still had this paper thing there.

I guess the second thing that happened was: when we had an office refit back in 2018 or early 2019 we moved to activity-based working, which meant we had to give up offices. We had no storage space. We each have a little locker. That was the last thing that killed off paper in our office—so much so that we would only use half the number of photocopiers that we had in the past. We can still print things and occasionally we do, but we cannot store it. We just do not have any space to store it so we cannot keep it.

Mr TANTARI: In my question I asked about whether there were any issues with the use of electronic signatures at all. Have you found any issues regarding that?

Mr Worrall: No, there have been no issues at all. We have felt the benefit here, but I think the entities have too, because of all those practical things around mail and then submitting things to us. That is just all electronic now. They submit that through a portal. It has gone very smoothly.

Mr CRANDON: We have reduced our paper—printing and what have you—in the parliament quite dramatically as well, but we still have some way to go with some of our committee work. I might say: we still seem to print quite a bit. The annual report 2021-22 advises that delays in reporting to parliament are due to the time it can take to get information from entities reluctant to release that information. Do you think the current legislation adequately supports you in situations such as this?

CHAIR: I note that the member for Coomera made a reflection in relation to the printing of paper on both the deputy chair and myself, but I shall let it go and put the question to you, Auditor-General.

Mr Worrall: I think that must be in the context of financial reports, I am assuming. As I have reported in the past, there is a bit of an impediment where entities themselves cannot release their financial statements until their annual report is tabled. As I have shown over the last three years, I think, there can be delays on when financial statements get signed and when annual reports get tabled. That can be up to six weeks for some entities. There is a requirement in the financial management standard that prohibits entities from releasing their financial statements until their annual report has been tabled.

CHAIR: We spoke before about the real-time dashboard capacity to monitor and share with departments financial information that is going through. That seemed quite innovative and new at the time it was put in place, but is that helping departments have better financial controls and structure their goals? How is the interrelationship between your office and the departments on that dashboard?

Mr Worrall: As part of most of my reports I seek to publish dashboards, and some of those dashboards I maintain on our website. The objective there is really twofold. I guess some of it is sharing information and providing insights back to the entities themselves to maybe give them a richer source of information, and some of that information is taking information that is already within government but then trying to marry it up to information in the public domain. That is part of it. I think the other part is also really just providing that information to parliament and to the people of Queensland so they can get a bit more of a richer understanding of what is going on. Obviously I think the entities themselves really have to pick that up and develop their own dashboards that work for them based on their operational imperatives.

CHAIR: We are approaching time. The member for Coomera is shuffling through papers.

Mr CRANDON: I would have been there a lot quicker had I had my electronic document open, but I have found it on the paper version. You have reduced the time it takes you to deliver audits. Can you please explain to the committee how you decreased the average time to deliver financial audits from 7.4 months to 6.7 months and how you plan to reach your target of six months? You are coming down on the length of time it takes you to deliver those audits.

I also note that your average cost of delivering financial audit reports is $102,636, which is significantly less than the targeted amount of $140,000. The average cost of reports on the results of assurance and performance audits, which includes the audit work and the report, was $262,000—$132,000 under your target figure. That is wonderful stuff, by the way. Good on you, but how have you managed to do that?

Mr Worrall: I will talk about the financial reports to parliament first. When I came into the role five years ago, I found our reports very lengthy and quite unwieldy—typically up to 100 pages and appendices. One change that has happened, both for the financial reports and for the performance audit reports, is that their length is a lot less. There was a lot of content in there that I felt did not really need to be there, so it is just trying to focus on the matters of significance because that is what the mandate says. I need to do these financial audits and report any matters of significance, so I only want to focus on those things and take away other noise. That has made the reports 20 to 35 pages long for the financial audit reports, whereas in the past they might have been pushing up to 80 to even 100 pages long. I think there is a lot less that has to be written. That makes it less work to write it and it makes it less work for us to get feedback from the entities themselves. I think that is why the time line has come down. That is why the cost has come down.

It is a similar sort of story for the performance audits. Typically they were 100 pages or maybe even longer. Now they are on average around 35 pages. It is the same sort of motivation on my part. There was a lot of noise in those reports that was really distracting from what I would see as the key points. That noise has been taken out. Those reports are shorter in length and, as a consequence, not as laborious to produce and also then navigate through the stakeholders.

There is another impact on the performance audits. Not all reports I would do under the performance audit mandate are a full-blown performance audit where I am offering reasonable assurance. Sometimes I might be just offering less assurance. Again, there is less work involved in that. Mind you, I have only probably done one or two of those a year. Those things are impacting on that.

CHAIR: I note that there are no further questions so we will at this point bring these proceedings to a close. Thank you for the information you have provided today. Thank you to our Hansard reporter and the broadcast staff who are assisting us. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary webpage in due course. I note there are no questions taken on notice so there is no need to follow up on that. With that I declare this public briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 12.18 pm.