



STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr CG Whiting MP—Chair
Mr JJ McDonald MP
Mr MJ Hart MP
Mr RI Katter MP
Mr JE Madden MP
Mr TJ Smith MP

Staff present:

Ms S Galbraith—Committee Secretary
Mr B Smith—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—CONSIDERATION OF AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO. 9 FOR 2021-22, *REGULATING DAM SAFETY*

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 29 AUGUST 2022

Brisbane

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The committee met at 10.00 am.

CHAIR: I declare open this public briefing for the committee's consideration of Auditor-General's report No. 9 for 2021-22, *Regulating dam safety*. My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. We are fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose lands, winds and waters we all share. With me here today are Mr Jim McDonald, deputy chair and member for Lockyer; Mr Jim Madden, member for Ipswich West; Mr Michael Hart, member for Burleigh; Mr Tom Smith, member for Bundaberg; and we should soon be joined by Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger. Mrs Deb Frecklington, member for Nanango, has been granted leave by the committee to participate in this morning's briefing.

This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I remind committee members that officials from the Queensland Audit Office are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

These proceedings 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. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Finally, I ask everyone to turn their mobile phones off or to silent mode, and your computers as well.

BROWN, Mr Darren, Senior Director, Queensland Audit Office

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

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

CHAIR: I welcome representatives from the Audit Office. I invite you to brief the committee after which the committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr Worrall: Thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee on report No. 9: 2021-22, *Regulating dam safety*, which was tabled on 8 December 2021. It is an important topic for the community in that dams are a significant piece of infrastructure that provide safe drinking water, irrigation, flood mitigation and energy and support to the extraction of minerals. In Queensland there are 107 referable dams and an estimated 790,000 people live downstream of the dams and would be at risk if these dams were to fail. State entities and local government own 92 of the 107 referable dams.

The audit examined how the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water regulated dam safety. We concluded that the department was not effectively managing the information it collects or targeting risks to noncompliance. The department had approved processes in place for collecting information for the legislated safety requirements; however, it was not effectively collecting information on its dam safety upgrade schedule. The schedule was originally set in 2005, when the department identified that many dams would not be able to safely release the floodwaters from a severe flood event. It gave dam owners key dates to update any spillways based on their capacity to safely release floodwaters. The department is not effectively monitoring progress to ensure all the upgrades will be completed by the 2025 and 2035 deadlines. Eight spillways must be upgraded by 2025 and 30 by 2035 with total costs estimated at \$3.4 billion. However, given the recent increases in the cost of materials and CPI, these costs have likely increased.

We also found the department's dam monitoring system was not effectively monitoring compliance with all safety requirements. It was using spreadsheets to monitor key aspects of compliance, but the individual spreadsheets were not up to date, complete or accurate. The department did not have clear line of sight or a consolidated view over compliance with the dam safety conditions on inspections. This was making it difficult for the department to track whether dam owners

were conducting and providing key reports on dam safety inspections on time. QAO found examples of inspection reports from owners being significantly overdue. In one case this was four years. The department has developed a risk prioritisation process based on the eight risk factors recommended by the 2012 Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry to inform half of its dam site visits. It also considers additional factors for the other half feeding into its visit schedule that are not risk based or well documented, such as the availability of resources, workload and travel budget constraints.

Lastly, the department has worked on developing good relationships with dam owners as part of its strategy to promote voluntary compliance. It runs workshops and training for owners and the community to increase understanding of dam safety principles and compliance requirements. The department relies almost exclusively on encouraging voluntary compliance to dam safety conditions and was reluctant to use the full range of enforcement options that it has available. While the voluntary compliance is part of any good regulatory approach, the department was not ensuring all owners complied quickly enough with all of the legislative reporting requirements.

You may also be interested in our interactive dashboard to explore information on the dams regulated by the department. You can see information on dam ownership, location, planned upgrades and other information on the structure, capacity and age of the dams. You can also find links to the emergency action plans for dams in your local area. The committee would benefit in hearing from the department on the progress of implementing our recommendations and the committee may also consider hearing from some of the state's major owners and operators of the dams. We are happy to take questions. Thank you.

Mr SMITH: You said that you do not believe the department has been effective. I wonder how far separated is 'effective' from 'satisfactory' in terms of other departments meeting standards to 'satisfactory', or are they not being effective to what your subjective term of 'effective' would be?

Mr Worrall: Their monitoring mechanisms, while they may have been designed to provide information, are not really working to the right standard. I think a good example of that is that point I made that the compliance reports the operator would need to lodge can be massively overdue. The spreadsheets are a definite problem. Each of the engineers who was doing inspections basically had their own individual spreadsheet. They were in different stages of being up to date. There were issues in that other people could actually make changes and there was no mechanism for tracking those changes. They could see when they were changed, but there was no security around that. There was no consolidated view by the department about how the regulation is working across the 107 dams because that information was contained in individual spreadsheets which did not talk to each other. That does not really sound effective to me.

Mr SMITH: How many dams are under the current management of government owned corporations? Do we have those numbers with us today? Could you provide a breakdown of each government owned corporation, please?

Mr Worrall: Those numbers are actually in the appendices to the report. It was a fairly small number.

Mr Flemming: Sunwater owns 22 of the 107 and other GOCs own six of the rest. Seqwater is not a GOC, but it owns 25.

Mr SMITH: Your report says that the department has not been consistent in terms of getting information and data and so forth from particular owners. Are any of those owners in this report government owned corporations that the department is not getting this information from, or are the government owned corporations meeting their expectations?

Mr Brown: The department was engaging more with government owned corporations, and that would be expected given the scale of those dams and the number of dams, but there were examples where, for example, the department was not aware of information that had not been provided by government owned corporations and it was actually the government owned corporations that drew their attention to their own failure to submit information. We have an example in the appendix where Seqwater notified the department a year after a particular report was due that it had not provided that report. The department was otherwise unaware that it had not received that report. By and large, there is a lot more engagement that goes on with the government owned corporations and obviously there is a lot more interaction and they tend to be a bit more proactive than some of the other operators.

Mr SMITH: The report states that you believe the department focuses on voluntary compliance but has been reluctant to use enforcement measures such as penalty infringement notices or court action where needed. Would you be able to provide any examples of where you believe that court action was required from the department?

CHAIR: That may be a difficult one for the auditor to answer. It may require some legal expertise.

Mr SMITH: They have mentioned in their report that they believe that court action was required.

Mr Brown: What we are referring to there—and we are not specific in relation to court action—is the whole range of enforceable options open to the department. Our particular focus was in relation to operators that had consistently failed to meet requirements to provide required reports over a number of periods despite requests from the department. In those situations, the department had a whole range of options open to them, including issuing show cause notices and potentially fines, all the way up to enforcement if the noncompliance persisted. What we have said is that a good regulator will have a scaled approach and mechanisms in there that would trigger the next level of enforcement action where necessary.

Mr SMITH: Is it the view of the office that the department is not enforcing penalty infringement notices or undertaking court action effectively, to use that word?

Mr Worrall: I think the view is, as Darren said, that they really should have a range of actions that they can take but they are not really using them to get compliance in a complete or timely way. A good example is figure 4C. There are five-yearly comprehensive safety inspections and there is supposed to be a report that flows to the regulator in relation to those. There were three of those that were on average outstanding by 945 days. Obviously there is no consequence in that scenario, because if there was they would have complied a lot sooner. That is an example of not ratcheting up mechanisms that they would have. I guess the ultimate mechanism would be to actually take legal action, but there are other things that you can do prior to getting to that stage. It is 945 days on average late and there is no action being taken to ensure compliance in that scenario.

Mr SMITH: Recommendation 2 is that the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water revises the acceptable flood capacity guidelines, requiring dam owners to advise it how and when spillways scheduled for upgrade will be completed and report progress. Is that the only part of the flood capacity guidelines that QAO is making a recommending for, or are there more in terms of the flood capacity guidelines that you would like to see amended or reviewed by the department?

Mr Worrall: That is the only one.

Mr McDONALD: Thank you for being here. It is a very important topic. I could not pick up where this inquiry started. Was this something that you self-generated?

Mr Worrall: That is a good question. I think it was. I think it would have come through our work plan, where we would have gone through the usual consultation process. It would have found its way onto the work plan and it would have come around to being audited. There were a number of other regulatory audits that I have done and this was another one in that sort of space.

Mr McDONALD: I appreciate that. Certainly it is an important topic. Was there any consideration during the inquiry for the overlap between risk management and water security?

Mr Worrall: Darren can jump in, but our focus on risk management was probably more around the regulator's inspection programs. We made comment in the report that they would have an annual inspection program. Fifty per cent of that program would be driven by their risk assessments in relation to those particular dams, but the other 50 per cent was more around practical considerations around staffing, travel budget, available days to do the inspections. That other 50 per cent were not really risk based, per se. Only half the program was informed by risk and the other half was informed by practical considerations. We said, 'Well, really, it should be driven by risk, and those practical considerations are really quite ancillary.'

Mr McDONALD: And understanding that risk?

Mr Worrall: That is exactly right, yes.

Mr Brown: Another consideration that we had in determining the scope of the audit was the fact that we had done a critical infrastructure audit previously which had included water infrastructure. We thought it was probably not a need at this particular point in time to go back and do that particular aspect of the audit, but it may be something that we follow up on in future. We also have on the forward work plan an audit scheduled for regional water supply. It is part of looking at this broader topic of water in a number of chunks to make it manageable.

Mr McDONALD: Obviously the obligation for government, and through the entities, to provide water security is critical for Queensland. In terms of a yearly inspection program and a five-yearly significant safety inspection program, how do those two fit together? Are they separate?

Mr Brown: There are different scales of what is required under those inspections. The yearly one tends to relate to compliance with conditions. The five-yearly then looks at a more detailed assessment of the dams. Then there is a 20-year inspection, which is much more detailed, looking at structural aspects and so forth.

Mr McDONALD: There were three of those five-yearly safety inspections that were 945 days overdue; is that right?

Mr Worrall: That is right. I am assuming they would have been the response from the operator to issues that were probably raised. Would that be right: 945 days would have been the response from the operators?

Mr Brown: That would be the amount of time it has taken for them to actually receive the report beyond when it was scheduled to be provided.

Mr McDONALD: Thus my question before. It is one thing to have an inspection program; it is another thing to actually understand how that inspection program fits with safety compliance.

Mr Worrall: If you are trying to encourage voluntary regulation through providing feedback about improvements and things like that, if there are massive delays like that then the voluntary compliance process is not really working, because there is such a time gap between when something has been inspected and then when improvements are being reported, if you know what I mean, or recommendations are being reported late.

Mr McDONALD: Sure. Throughout the audit and each of those inspection programs—obviously engineering standards change over the time, which would be a consideration for the risk issues. How were the entities able to adjust, satisfy or consider each of those engineering standards?

Mr Brown: The owners will engage engineers to do those safety inspections for them. A requirement for the engineers, obviously, to keep their qualifications and practices is that they are conversant with the current standards. The department then reviews the reports that are provided by the owner. One of the aspects the engineers would be looking for would be compliance with standards.

Mr McDONALD: I am sure I picked up that the estimated cost for safety upgrades originally was \$500 million and that has moved to something like \$4.5 billion. Is that because of changes in engineering standards or is it because of additional cost?

Mr Brown: A lot of that was associated with recalculations from the Bureau of Meteorology and different hydrology assessments changing the requirements for what those spillways would actually be required to deliver. It was more in that aspect rather than engineering practices or standards.

Mr McDONALD: Through this audit report you had no visibility or consideration of that? This was more about the risk program?

Mr Worrall: That \$4.6 billion that you mentioned actually included \$0.96 billion of upgrades that had already been taken. It is almost a billion dollars less—about \$3.6 billion—at the time of the report.

Mr McDONALD: Again I come back to the water security considerations. Obviously that is outside of any upgrades for additional water security; this is purely around dam safety?

Mr Worrall: This is purely around the spillway upgrades.

Mr McDONALD: I did not pick up in the government's response to you any consideration of funding or how they may assist local governments and other entities in being able to fund these upgrades. Is there any advice that you can give us regarding that?

Mr Worrall: That is something you would have to ask the department.

Mr McDONALD: I take your suggestion, Mr Worrall. I think it would be valuable for us to do that.

Mr HART: 2005 is when this whole thing started. Did the Audit Office have a look to see whether the standards were set by science? Are you aware whether it is a policy decision or a scientific decision? You mentioned that the cost had increased because of positions the BOM had put forward. Is it based on science or on policy at the end of the day?

Mr Worrall: I will let Darren answer this, but there is a set of standards across Australia that overlays all of this which Queensland uses.

Mr HART: The same standard, or a higher or lower standard?

Mr Worrall: I think it is the same standard.

Mr Brown: There is a consistent standard across the country. In terms of the need for the upgrades, our understanding is that that was based on science and engineering. In terms of the time frames that were given for those upgrades, we could not get any evidence from the department that they were based on any objective or scientific assessment.

Mr HART: Earlier you were talking about enforcement action. Are you aware of any enforcement action at all on any of these projects?

Mr Brown: We asked the department to provide us with evidence of any cases where they had taken enforcement action. The department could not provide us with any evidence.

Mr HART: So they are doing all this on a spreadsheet that is spread through different members of the department. Do they have a process in place for enforcement at all from the results of those spreadsheets?

Mr Brown: There are mechanisms for the department to take enforcement action. The discussions we had with the department were that it was very much their preferred approach not to. Their view was that if they were having to take enforcement action they had failed as a regulator. They were the references they made to us. We had discussions with them around the various ways a regulator can actually be effective in achieving preferred outcomes and improving compliance across the board, not only with individual operators.

Mr HART: You just said that their concern was that they had failed as a regulator if they ended up having to prosecute someone?

Mr Brown: They had put a considerable amount of effort into voluntary compliance. I think their view was more that they had failed in their voluntary compliance approach if they were then having to issue infringement notices or prosecute.

Mr HART: How does that sit with ministerial oversight of what is going on in this department? Was the AO able to check whether they had a process of passing this information back to the minister, or are they avoiding that because of being the regulator and the prosecutor in this case?

Mr SMITH: Point of order—

CHAIR: There is a point of order. Did you want to finish your question?

Mr HART: My question is: did the AO have a look to see whether there were any ministerial oversight processes in place for members of the department to report up to the minister about these issues?

CHAIR: Member, you are asking about the ministerial oversight processes?

Mr HART: Processes.

Mr Worrall: The audit would have stopped with the accountable officer. That person was the regulator, so our audit would have looked at the activities they had undertaken through their department to regulate these entities. We did not look at any reporting they may or may not have done to the minister.

Mr HART: At the end of the day, if they do not have a process for enforcement they are not going to have a ministerial oversight process, but that is okay. In terms of the floods in 2011, did the AO find any evidence of any input from the results of that flooding, the court case et cetera that changed the processes the department had in place for dam safety?

Mr Brown: Yes, we did. We refer to the report about the risk assessment criteria the department applies. The eight factors that they consider to prioritise their inspection program are based on criteria that came out of the 2012 commission of inquiry into the 2011 floods.

CHAIR: You now have the response we received from the department on Friday. I refer to table 1. This addresses some of the questions we have had about oversight. I will just go through some of the things the department has said. In the future we will ask if you can write back and give us your opinion on this response, and maybe at a future briefing we will ask if you could update us on this particular document.

They have said that they now have a dedicated project team to implement the recommendations in the report. They have an allocation of \$3.4 million in the budget to address those recommendations. They have said that all dams due for upgrade by 2015 were completed on schedule and that all dams due to be upgraded by 2025 are on schedule. They state that all instances of noncompliance in the appendices have been addressed and that recommendations 2 to 9 have been addressed. If that is the case, would that go a long way to comprehensively addressing those recommendations that you have in your report?

Mr Worrall: We have not had a chance to examine that, but they might have brought things up to date. I guess we also would be interested in what changes they have made so that they are actually going to not just rely on education and no enforcement, because we know that has not really worked; what changes they have made to their processes so that they have an escalation process—yes, they are doing education but they also have other things in their toolkit to require compliance; what changes they have made to their information systems around spreadsheets; and what changes they have made to their inspection program.

It is not just about the two lots of 50 per cent of the way they are doing that. I think there were some other things we mentioned in there about the inspection program which is about more transparency around these future upgrades. I think that was the bit that was also missing: how the dam operators are progressing those upgrades because 2025 is three years away and 2035 is 12 or 13 years away. From what we saw, we could not really see that they were factoring that into their risk assessments of where the inspections should be. They were not getting enough feedback around how the entities were actually progressing those upgrades. If you think about it, an upgrade of a major dam would take years, I would imagine, in the planning and then execution.

CHAIR: Following on from that, and this may be something that you would want to follow up with the department, we would like to see from the department exactly what is involved in increased internal monitoring, reporting, collaboration and an escalation pathway for cases of severe noncompliance. Referring back to something that I have raised consistently, if these bodies had that audit and risk committee in place, would that assist them in making sure they carry out the compliance activities that they should?

Mr Worrall: It could have potentially assisted it. I think it would depend on how effective that audit and risk committee is—and you would expect that they would have a risk register, and you would think one of the risks would be regulatory failure or something like that—and whether the committee is actually monitoring management's attention to those risks. In terms of some of these other things that have been in the public domain for a number of years, you would expect that there would be some risks recorded around that.

The other relevant consideration there—and I am not knowledgeable about the specific make-up of this particular audit committee, but I did that audit on the effectiveness of audit committees in departments and statutory bodies. In essence, most of the departmental audit committees were largely just management committees. The people who are on the committee might have had a minority of independent members, but it also included some executives. I find it difficult to understand how a committee can hold management to account when management makes up that committee. That is probably a good question to ask the department about: the make-up and the line of sight that the audit committee would have over these things.

I might just make a comment. Normally we do these audits. Last year we introduced that new report where we want entities to self-assess their progress towards the recommendations. That was a report that we tabled in November. That is going to be an annual report. We will be doing another annual report, but there is a three-year lag before we ask these entities to report on the recommendations. Normally we might just do one follow-up audit in each of our cycles ourselves. At the moment we would have no plans to go back and validate what they are saying and they would need to self-report in three years down the track. I am not saying we will not. We have capacity to probably do 10 new audits a year and maybe one follow-up.

Mr KATTER: Following on from the member for Lockyer's line of questioning, my mind jumps immediately to the downstream use of water from the dam. In the Burdekin I had some complaints from growers there about new regulations which have pushed their costs back up and they are looking at exiting the system. I understand that you are not involved in the management of the business—that is a different entity—but they are going to say that they have a report from the Audit Office and they have to respond. Is there consideration or discussion around the downstream impacts of the advice that you give, or is there acknowledgement from the department of the impacts of that? It is great to talk about dam safety and people's safety, but is it also a conversation about what the hell a dam is there for? It is there to provide that service and, based on the business case or the way they operate the accounting standard that operates it, which I totally object to, it has an impact. I am interested in that space. Is there consciousness of that when you are giving that advice or is there discussion around that?

Mr Worrall: The audit was really around the regulatory framework. It is not for us to decide what the regulatory framework is. Obviously governments of the day have signed up to the regulatory framework. Our audit was really focusing on the compliance of the regulatory framework. I guess the operators might be able to talk about how that impacts on their operations perhaps.

Mr KATTER: There was no discussion like that back towards you, or was there an interaction of that nature?

Mr Worrall: We did have some interactions with operators during the audit. At the start of the audit, Patrick and I actually did an inspection of Nerang Dam and we had a presentation by both the regulator and the operators in terms of how the regulation works at that particular dam. We had an inspection of the dam and the dam wall. At that forum, no, there was no discussion with me around that. I am not sure if that came up in your discussions?

Mr Brown: The audit team did meet with a number of dam owners and got submissions from them and so forth. Some of the feedback we had was around the regulators not actually following up with the owners. The owners raised that themselves. I think a lot of the things that we are recommending are things that we would have expected the regulator to be doing. Things like collating information properly, ensuring your information is accurate and making sure you are following up on reports that are due are not things that are going to have a downstream impact on irrigators and so forth.

Mr Worrall: The only other comment I would make—it came up in discussion earlier—is that those upgrade targets of 2025 and 2035—I think Darren had made the comment that as part of the audit we could not find, I guess, an engineering/scientific basis for that timetable. I guess that timetable is the thing driving these dates and when these upgrades need to happen.

Mr MADDEN: Thank you very much for coming in today. This report is of great interest to me as the member for Ipswich West, as you would appreciate. The Bremer River and the Brisbane River converge in my electorate and I have a great interest in Moogerah Dam, Wivenhoe Dam, Somerset Dam and Atkinsons Dam. My questions will mainly relate to attachment E, starting at page 44 of your report. I will not be departing from that. In the column where it says 'date of last audit', what is that auditing?

Mr Brown: I believe that would have been the last major safety inspection audit. I will have to confirm that and come back to you.

Mr MADDEN: Assuming that it is a safety audit, it is of concern to me that the last safety audit for Atkinsons Dam was 2010, before the 2010-11 flood. Compare that to Moogerah Dam, where the last safety audit was 2019. With Somerset and Wivenhoe, it says the last safety audit was 2007, which predates the 2010-11 floods. With regard to Wivenhoe Dam, having lived in Lowood during the 2010-11 flood I was aware that there was substantial damage to the outflow gates and they needed to reinforce the walls—I guess this verges on an opinion—but I would like you to tell me what you think about the fact that Wivenhoe Dam apparently has not had a safety audit since 2007. Is that of concern to the Audit Office? Is that something we should be concerned about?

Mr Worrall: The way I would answer that is by referencing my earlier comments around the way they were assigning risks and then how that played out into the inspection program because, as I said, 50 per cent of their inspections were driven by risk and the other 50 per cent were driven by practical considerations.

Mr MADDEN: I am sorry if I am verging on an opinion here, but would it not be better if we had regular time periods for safety audits? In this case, after a major event there was not a safety audit. Would it not be better if we had safety audits after a major event or a flood in that particular area or regular time periods for safety audits?

Mr Brown: I think what that column is referring to is the major 20-year inspection audit that is required. There are a number of different levels of inspections that occur. There is the annual inspection around conditions and so forth and then there is a five-yearly inspection as well. They are still occurring. I am pretty sure this column is referring to those major 20-year inspections.

Mr MADDEN: You think that is the 20-year inspection?

Mr Brown: I will have to confirm that, but I am pretty sure that is what that is.

Mr MADDEN: If you could do that for me, I would appreciate it. That is the extent of my questions. I will leave you with this: I am looking at a report where it says 'date of last audit'. I do not know what the audit was—no offence to the Audit Office—but I think it is important that we know when safety audits are done. I would like to know if there was a safety audit done on Wivenhoe Dam last year, for example, and I wonder what mechanism that would come to me from. I cannot wait for your report every so often. Should that be something publicly available?

Mr Worrall: That sort of information ideally should come from the regulators.

Mr MADDEN: Thank you. I have probably asked for too many opinions.

Mr Flemming: The information we tabled in appendix E we put that in appendix E so that we would be able to include it on the dashboard that we have on our website. That is the 20-year safety inspection. Ultimately, that was a dashboard that the department was interested in taking over at some point. I do not know if that is going to happen, because I think that information need is something that is there and that is why we tried to turn those facts and figures into something that was usable now.

Mr MADDEN: Thank you very much for clarifying that. Could you confirm that that column is referring to 20-year audits?

Mr Worrall: Our plans would not be to maintain our dashboard forever. We would say that the regulator should be maintaining some sort of dashboard to report information to the community.

Mr MADDEN: For example, if after the 2010-11 flood there was a safety audit of Wivenhoe Dam, that would be included in the dashboard?

Mr Worrall: Potentially it could be, yes. We felt we wanted to put some information out there, but there might be other information that the community is interested in, like the things you have been talking about. Ultimately, it is not my role to do that. I guess we are trying to encourage them to do something like that. There will come a point where we will just turn our dashboard off.

Mr MADDEN: Thank you for coming in today.

Mr HART: The department has told us that they are on track for their upgrades for 2025. The 2022-23 budget is out now, including forward estimates for the next three or four years. Are there sufficient funds in the budget as it stands to do those upgrades?

Mr Worrall: We cannot answer that. You would have to ask the department and the operators.

Mr HART: It would not be part of your audit to make sure there are sufficient funds?

Mr Worrall: No. What we said about those upgrades was that we could not see the progress or the planning that was happening with the operators for those upgrades reflected in the department's approach to inspection programs. I guess that was a suggestion that they needed more information around how they are progressing towards those upgrades, whether they are 2025 or 2035. We have not delved into the funding side of it. I think that question you could direct to both the department as the regulator—it should have some line of sight—and the actual operators because they would have the detailed information about how much these things are going to cost.

Mr HART: It sounds like a question we need to ask.

Mr SMITH: I have two rapid-fire questions. Relating back to the table that the member for Ipswich West was discussing, the key information on referable dams, can you clarify that all of the figures in there come directly from the department? They are not any Audit Office numbers that have been amended or updated; is that correct?

Mr Flemming: Yes, they were all data that the state provided.

Mr SMITH: The reason I ask is: if we go to Paradise Dam in the Bundaberg region—Paradise Dam is very important—we have the population at risk, 40,520 people. The last audit was in 2008; is that correct?

Mr Worrall: That was the last 20-year audit.

Mr SMITH: Are you aware whether or not that figure is still at over 40,000 people, or has the department updated that to cater for the growth in population within the Bundaberg region?

Mr Flemming: My understanding is that the population-at-risk figure is the current figure. That is consistent with what is in the emergency action plans that are the current emergency plans. They are not at the same time as safety audit.

Mr SMITH: Based on this figure from the Audit Office, if the government of the day had not acted to ensure the safety of Paradise Dam there would have been 40,520 people at risk in the Bundaberg region—is that correct?—based on their numbers.

Mr Worrall: You are asking where the information comes from at the bottom of the table. The source is the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

Mr SMITH: But we can confirm that 40,000 people are at risk.

Mr Worrall: It is their data.

CHAIR: We will have to ask the department that.

Mr Worrall: Those numbers are the numbers of people downstream that could have some sort of impact, but, again, that impact is probably scalable depending on the extent of the inundation.

Mr SMITH: Absolutely. There are a lot of lives at risk.

Mr McDONALD: My question was in relation to the \$4.6 billion. Is that included in any depreciation schedules or was that outside the scope of your report?

Mr Worrall: As I said earlier, the \$4.6 billion includes about \$0.96 billion already spent. The remaining, let's say, \$3.6 billion is really just capital works. That would be just how much it cost to make those improvements. That would not include any sort of future depreciation of those improvements.

Mr McDONALD: For clarification, is that up to 2025 works or 2035?

Mr Worrall: I think it is a combination.

Mr McDONALD: To be able to achieve each of those 30-year spillway upgrades?

Mr Worrall: Yes.

CHAIR: That concludes the public briefing. Thank you to everyone who participated today. We have some questions to follow up. One was confirming the 20-year column.

Mr Worrall: We are actually confirming that now. That is the 20-year audit.

Mr MADDEN: With regard to that, could you provide details of what that 20-year audit encompasses?

Mr Worrall: You would need to ask the department. They would have an audit program for that.

CHAIR: We can follow that up with the department. There are no questions on notice. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on our webpage in due course. I declare this briefing closed.

The committee adjourned at 10.49 am.