




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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### **INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE NOTE**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (11.33 am): I rise to make a contribution to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee's report on the consideration of the Auditor-General's *Results of audit—local government entities 2014-15*. I would like to thank the committee secretariat staff for the professional manner in which they have worked to prepare this report for the committee members. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my fellow committee members from both sides of the House for their input into this report prior to and following my joining the committee.

In May 2016 the Auditor-General's report 17 for 2015-16, *Results of audit—local government entities 2014-15*, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly and referred to the committee for consideration. The report states that the Auditor-General's view is that timely and accurate financial reporting is essential for effectiveness in decision-making, management of public funds and the delivery of public accountability. It is important to highlight some of the Auditor-General's comments in this report—

In 2014-15, 86 per cent of councils met the 31 October financial reporting deadline. This, the Auditor-General reported 'is the best result in the history of local government financial reporting in Queensland.'

Congratulations to the local governments and, in particular, their very hardworking staff right across the state of Queensland who work to ensure that they meet these time frames amongst their other position responsibilities within council and the other challenges they face when they are doing their day-to-day work in the council. I note that the Queensland Audit Office has acknowledged that it is difficult for some councils to recruit suitably qualified people to be on the local council audit committee and has made some suggestions as to how this can be done. This is a particularly relevant and valid issue in many of the smaller councils, one that is often very challenging for small communities, for instance, the Bulloo Shire Council, which is a fantastic area. I took the member for Burdekin out to meet with the council in my electorate. They have an estimated population of 376 people. Obviously there would be considerable family and business relationships between those who live in that council area and it is difficult to find someone who is comfortable to sit on a local government audit committee because everybody actually knows everyone. In some cases everybody is related to everyone and they are also in business in some way with everyone. When you have a population of 376 people it is very difficult.

I note that the Local Government Association of Queensland has a panel of people who can be accessed if councils thought it was appropriate. I think that it goes without saying that the people from the LGAQ would have a very good understanding of the local governments across Queensland, the diversity of those local governments and the challenges that they face from Cape York right down to places like Cunnamulla.

In relation to financial sustainability, the report notes—

The Auditor-General's analysis of local government sustainability indicated an overall improvement in risk assessments in comparison to the previous financial year.

I think that is testament to the very hard work that our local government staff and our elected councils, councillors and mayors undertake to ensure that they do have that financial sustainability. They take very seriously their role in council. I commend Queensland local government mayors, councillors and their hardworking staff. I have seen some of the staff in my electorate—some of the CEOs—going to work on Anzac Day. They do an incredible job. They work very, very hard for their communities. I would like to thank all of those mayors, councillors and local government staff for the work that they do across communities in Queensland. I thank them wholeheartedly for their efforts and for the work that they are doing to make sure that they meet the Auditor-General's requirements.