




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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INNOVATION, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.34 pm): I am pleased to speak on the actual audit report that is before us today. The follow-up report on environmental regulation of the resources and waste industries undertaken by the Queensland Audit Office has seen great strides in the environmental regulation. The previous report undertaken in the 2013-14 financial year found that the then department of environment and heritage protection's planning risk assessments were hindered by poor data and inadequate systems. It was clear from the original audit that there were also a number of issues that arose as a result of the responsible departments—the department of environment and heritage and the department of natural resources and mines—not coordinating and sharing information.

That 2013-14 report concluded that the department of environment and heritage protection was not 'fully effective' in its supervision, monitoring and enforcement of environmental conditions and that the two departments were not effectively managing financial assurance or mines that were in care and maintenance—that is, mines not in operation—and this unnecessarily exposed the state to liability and the environment to harm. The QAO made nine recommendations at the time which both departments accepted.

The follow-up report by the Queensland Audit Office in 2017-18 shows that the departments have fully implemented seven of the nine recommendations. The remaining two recommendations which have not been implemented have been overtaken by the government's implementation of the new financial assurance framework in Queensland. The QAO has found that the department of environment is now 'better placed' to target its strategies, operations and resources to maximise compliance and effectively detect noncompliance.

New systems and processes in place will also allow the two relevant departments to improve the way they collect, share and store data. We have seen a change from a reactive compliance activity program, mainly responding to complaints and incidents, to more proactively targeting high-risk sites for inspection.

The department has also increased the amount of financial assurance held by the state, addressed data issues, improved compliance and reduced outstanding debts. It is good to also note that the QAO has proposed conducting a performance audit, monitoring environmental conditions for mining activities in 2019-20, where the Audit Office expects many of the changes implemented by the department will have matured and their effectiveness should be more evident.

I would like to thank the Queensland Audit Office, the committee secretariat and fellow committee members for their work on this follow-up report and, importantly, the departments that have implemented the recommendations of the original audit.