




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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**STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Report, Motion to take Note

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.26 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee report No. 11 titled *Consideration of Auditor-General's report 19: 2016-17—Security of critical water infrastructure* tabled on 19 July 2018.

I rise to speak to report No. 11. This is one of the most important reports that this committee has done. It points out that our water supply is vulnerable at certain points. I hope that this report will put water entities on notice. I hope it will stir them into greater action to ensure that our water infrastructure is more secure.

In this report, two large risks have been pointed out and the first is telemetry and water control systems. It is clear that there is a huge growth in remote access to our water control systems, but that also means that there are some increased vulnerabilities to attack or disruption, which have led to sewerage systems overflowing or reductions in water pressure. Remote access is great when you are servicing those facilities, but it opens up more entry points into our water systems.

Another risk outlined in the report relates to the systems and processes. When we were briefed on the report we heard some concerning evidence, the crux of which is that water control systems have not been adequately secure. Why is that? It is partially because of the age of the control systems. They are ongoing and we are trying to integrate into those aged systems some newer corporate networks. All the entities said that they could operate their plants manually, but none of them demonstrated that. Only one entity demonstrated that it had documented its manual operations procedures.

The report outlines that cybersecurity systems are not adequate, affecting basic things such as changing passwords regularly, installing needed program updates, locking unattended computers and limiting physical access to buildings. Those are all pretty straightforward things that many other government corporations have done.

There are a number of issues I will mention in passing. There are many points of entry for someone wanting to breach the security of our water assets. That has been exacerbated by the sheer number of water assets in Queensland across what we know is a very broad area. There are 85 registered drinking water service providers, but 69 of those 85 supply under 1,000 people. There are 300 individual water supply sources.

There have been some far-reaching and special recommendations from the Audit Office handed to these water entities. They include: integrate all risk management frameworks; facilitate information sharing; improve oversight and monitoring of IT; establish incident response plans; test capabilities to respond to incidents; train staff; get business continuity plans in order; update and test disaster and recovery plans; and plan to deal with incidents of multiple system failures.

I view what we have learned as deserving of wider attention. As I have said, I hope that our water entities are listening to this or take note of this. The committee was concerned that the departmental progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Audit Office has not been timely and therefore has been limited. We note that there are a number of actions that will not be delivered by the original deadline. That is why we have said that we want to be updated by June 2019 on the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2. Progress has been made and we are seeing a real commitment to closing these gaps.

Lastly, I acknowledge that there are many hardworking people in the water and sewerage industry. I have worked with many over the years. I know that they are dedicated to the community and their local government. I have always been impressed with their dedication to the service and the community, especially at times when they are very much needed. I commend the report to the House.