




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.03 pm): I rise to address the Queensland Audit Office report in relation to government procurement which was published in 2022 and we are getting around to debating now at the back end of 2023. What strikes me about this report is that this is an issue that the Queensland Audit Office has investigated and reported on many times over the course of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The first report in 2016 made some important recommendations. That was followed up in 2017-18 reporting on progress. In 2021 it was reported that the recommendations had been fully implemented by the government but the Queensland Audit Office report states the opposite. The Audit Office report states—

Queensland Government Procurement reported it has fully implemented this recommendation and has developed a data strategy.

The Audit Office also states—

We continue to find, however, that the data being collected is not consistently categorised and new systems and processes have not always resulted in information suitable for procurement analysis.

It is quite concerning if the Queensland public cannot have confidence that when something is said to have been implemented it actually has been implemented. How can we have confidence that the government is governing in the interest of all Queenslanders.

We are talking about fairly significant issues with respect to procurement. The recommendations the Audit Office made in there make sense. I think they should be implemented. I would call on the government to pay attention to this issue. We are talking about the use of a considerable amount of taxpayers funds. The measures reported in the Audit Office report are genuinely concerning.

I want to focus on some of the reporting in relation to use of data and the limitations associated with the government's use of data. The Audit Office found that there are significant issues with the use of data for procurement analysis and decision-making. They talk about the fact that departments produce data to meet their financial, budgeting and reporting obligations rather than for procurement analysis and that that same data is not suitable for use as procurement analysis. They talk about the fact that there are a significant number of transactions that need to be removed from the data because they are not relevant and that finance expenditure transactions do not always adequately explain what goods or services are being purchased and why they are being purchased. It also goes on the say that the data does not link to supplier contracts or whole-of-government contractual arrangements.

The reason this is important is Queenslanders need to have confidence that the taxpayer money that is being spent by this government to fund their operations and the delivery of government services and infrastructure is spent in the best way possible. If we cannot assess that because the government either does not want to or is incapable of doing so through their collection of data and the reporting of that data, that should genuinely be a concern for all Queenslanders.

The Audit Office talks about the fact that the categorisation of expenditure by data is subjective. It is like so many things we see with the government—there is no leadership and no coordination from the top across departments. What happens is that Queenslanders lose as a consequence. Queenslanders lose and we spend more delivering government services and on government procurement than we would otherwise because there is a lack of coordination across departments. The Audit Office talks about the fact that there was an opportunity to improve the quality of the existing data through the implementation of a consistent classification system, but sees no movement on that front from the government.

The member of Gympie spoke about the use of consultants, which the Audit Office also raised in their report. They talk about the fact that savings could be found in the procurement of consultant services if the corresponding expenditure was classified in a more consistent and detailed manner across departments. They go on to say—

The current expenditure data does not easily show why a consultant was engaged or how much each engagement has cost.

I have a suspicion as to why the government may not want to know how much was spent and what was delivered. In many cases, I suspect not much is the answer. We know that this government has an addiction to spending money on big four consultancies rather than empowering the Public Service and using them to the best of their capability.

Perhaps even more concerning is the fact that the Audit Office identifies that this lack of data in relation to consultants actually means that consultants could be engaged by another department for the exact same purpose. We could be paying consultants twice to deliver the same outcome which would not necessarily have needed to be the case had the government had an overarching framework across all of government.

I am running out of time, but one thing I want to place on the record is that small and family business frequently talk to me about how difficult it is to do business with the state government. They talk about the fact that tenders are very difficult to navigate, there is a lack of genuine commitment to small and family business and that a number of government departments have poor payment terms. Queenslanders deserve better.