




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.40 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee Report No. 33, 57th Parliament, *Examination of Auditor-General Report 9: 2021-22—Regulating dam safety*, tabled on 5 December 2022.

This report is around regulating dam safety. There are a couple of things I want to speak to. Firstly, I commend the report. I commend what the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water has done as outlined in this report. I will quickly go over how we arrived at this point. This report is a follow-up from the 2021-2022 Auditor-General's report. It looked a year on after some recommendations were made to the department on how they can better improve their processes. It is well worthy to read this out. Originally, the Auditor-General made nine recommendations to the department. The committee found that—

One year on, all 9 recommendations have been implemented in a comprehensive and timely manner. It is clear that the department embraced the opportunity to improve the regulatory framework for dam safety to ensure that public safety risks are being appropriately managed and should be complemented for their diligence.

That sums up what the committee found. Continuing on with the conclusion, we stated—

... the manner in which the department has addressed the Auditor-General's report is to be commended.

One year on, the committee is satisfied that all 9 recommendations have been implemented in a comprehensive and timely manner. It is clear that the department embraced the opportunity to improve the implementation of the regulatory framework ...

I think that really sums up why there should be congratulations given to the department. As we said, they embraced what needed to be done. I will quickly go over some of the specific recommendations they addressed. For example, recommendation 1 was to improve the implementation and application of the regulatory framework—that was completed. Recommendation 2 was to revise the acceptable flood capacity guidelines—that was completed. Recommendation 3 was to review frequencies for conducting risk assessments—that was completed. Recommendation 4 was to maximise the engineering expertise available—that was completed. Recommendation 5 was to revise and document its process for selecting the number and priority of dam site audits. It goes on. As all of these recommendations have been addressed, as I said, I think we should compliment the department. We will ask the minister to pass on the compliments to the department for what they have achieved.

The important matter we should take from this—and it is very clear, after witnessing the events in Libya this week and the failure of the two dams in Derna and the impact it has had on that particular city all the way over on the other side of the world—is that it is very clear that the world is entering an unimagined time of change from climate change and climate risk. It is very clear we are entering a phase of extended dry periods to come. However, when the rain events come, they can be quite large and catastrophic. This places huge stress on the dams we have in place. Certainly, our thinking needs to involve a re-engineering or a re-imagining of what we do with dams and apply that to Queensland.

As is said in the report, there are 101 dams that are regulated by the department. A lot of those are private and there are many to oversee. What is very clear from this report is that the department is committed to that oversight.

I will conclude by saying that we talk about water planning a lot in this place. Reading through this report again, it is very clear that water planning now is inextricably linked with climate change planning. We cannot plan for water security without planning for the effects of climate change. It is really important. Where will the water fall? How often will it fall? How much water are we looking at coming through? Basically, can we catch it and can we catch it safely? These are really important matters, I believe, to water planning for the future, but you cannot look at water planning for the future without fully embracing climate change science and climate change predictions. To safely manage dams and water into the future, we need to ensure climate change planning is at the centre of everything we do in this particular field. I commend the report to the House.