



Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**


**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2023

**STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.21 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the examination of the Auditor-General's reports on the water sector. The Auditor-General's reports examined by the committee included report No. 9, *Water 2020*; report No. 3, *Water 2021*; and report No. 4, *2021 status of the Auditor-General's recommendations*. It is obvious that some time has passed since those Auditor-General reports were written and it is disappointing that we are only starting to consider them now.

The reports summarise the audit results for our water entities. I appreciate and thank the State Development and Regional Industries Committee for their focus on the topic of water entities, strengthening their information security systems and cybersecurity risks, which are alive and well. The report also covers other issues that I will touch on. In relation to cybersecurity and information systems, for not only our water entities but also government departments, the question must be asked and will continue to be asked: what is the government doing about it? Where is our data held? Who has the use of that data? More and more individuals are becoming increasingly concerned about cybersecurity leaks. It is imperative that our water entities take this extremely seriously, as has been recommended by the committee.

I refer to the liability of Seqwater for damages following the 2011 floods class action. In 2021 I mentioned in this House that the report found the financial audit results of Queensland's six state owned water sector entities were reliable apart from one non-recorded liability and expense relating to one entity. Of course, that was Seqwater's 2011 flood class action liability. Seqwater received a qualified opinion for their audit for not recording that liability and matching expense. At the time, the LNP members of the committee rightfully questioned the matter as a cause for great concern. As time has shown, Seqwater successfully appealed against the court judgement and did not have to pay damages to the group members of the class action. At the time of that class action decision, I said that the Premier had the power to direct those government owned corporations not to undertake appeals. It was a cruel action that cost taxpayers even more so that entities could carry on defending themselves in court.

At the time when these reports were prepared, Queensland was in the grip of a drought, as it definitely is now, particularly in the central and south-east regions. The issue of water security was noted in both reports as continuing to pose challenges such that 'projects that contribute to the reliable provision of an acceptable quality and quantity of water are a priority'. In 2023, we find ourselves back at that point with drought conditions upon us once again. In 2022, the Labor government was given a breather with heavy rainfall and water inflows into our catchments. However, it feels like we are back to square one when it comes to water security for South-East Queensland.

The government's complete failure to plan for and deliver water security in our great state continues. We have had the announcement of a desalination plant but with no details, no time frame, no construction and not even a location. On this side of the House we constantly talk about the

Palaszczuk government being in chaos and crisis when it comes to water security. Their failure to deliver water security, just like cybersecurity as has been outlined in this report, is another perfect example of that. Fairly soon, the people of South-East Queensland are going to see rising water costs because of the failure to plan. Queenslanders keep suffering because the Palaszczuk government has failed to cater for the population growth ahead of us. Queenslanders definitely deserve better than this.

I finish by thanking the members of the committee, in particular the LNP members of the committee, of course.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I did say all 'members of the committee': Mr Chris Whiting, Mr Jim McDonald, Mr Michael Hart, Mr Robbie Katter, Mr Jim Madden and even Mr Tom Smith. Hopefully, by having a position on this committee, the member for Bundaberg will learn something about water in this state.