



Speech By  
**Jim Madden**


**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023

## **STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE**

### **Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (3.49 pm): I wish to make a contribution with regard to report No. 33 of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee titled *Examination of Auditor-General Report 9: 2021-22—Regulating dam safety*, tabled in December 2022. The committee's report details the State Development and Regional Industries Committee's examination of the department's response to the Auditor-General's report No. 9 of 2021-22 titled *Regulating dam safety*. The committee found that the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water needs to improve its regulatory approach to ensure that Queensland dams owners are monitoring, assessing and responding to dam safety risks in line with their legislated responsibilities.

The Auditor-General's report contained nine recommendations and all nine recommendations have been implemented by the department. These recommendations put in place a regulatory framework for dam safety to ensure that public safety risks are being appropriately managed. The committee made one recommendation, however, which was that government entities such as bulk water providers and relevant local governments be required to add independent audit and risk management committees to their governance structures.

Water security is the key to the prosperity of the Queensland economy, but this requires regulation of dam safety, which in Queensland is regulated by the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act. The purpose of this regulatory framework is to minimise the risk to the public living and working downstream of dams resulting from dam failure. In Queensland there are 111 referable dams regulated by the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act. Referable dams are dams where two or more people would be at risk if the dam were to fail. Dam owners of the 111 referable dams include state owned entities like Seqwater and Sunwater—which own around half of the referable dams—as well as local government councils, mining companies and large pastoral companies.

The Queensland dam safety regulatory framework places the responsibility for monitoring, assessing and responding to potential dam safety risks on the dam owner. This regulatory framework created by the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act is enforced by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water to ensure dam owners are properly undertaking their requirements as set out in the legislation. The department also sets dam safety conditions for each of the 111 referable dams. To enforce the act, the department uses a range of regulatory tools to achieve compliance including education and informal and formal warnings. Penalty infringement notices and prosecutions are also available. However, the Auditor-General's report found that, while the department has the key design elements of an effective regulatory framework in place, it is not effectively or consistently applying some important elements of this framework.

The audit focused on three areas of compliance: collecting dam safety information from owners, identifying and managing risks, and dealing with noncompliance. As I have indicated, the Auditor-General made nine recommendations which have now been implemented in full by the

department. The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water provided a detailed response to the committee on each of the nine recommendations and stated its ongoing commitment to the regulatory safety framework.

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow members of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. I particularly thank Margaret Telford, the chief of the secretariat. I also thank the other members of the committee secretariat, Hansard and the submitters. I commend the report titled *Examination of Auditor-General Report 9: 2021-22—Regulating dam safety* to the House.