



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**


**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Public-Private Partnerships**

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (2.49 pm): I rise to speak on the impact of public-private partnerships on the democratic values and processes of government in Queensland. Increasingly we are seeing the state's public sector managers and politicians looking to private corporations to provide a vast array of infrastructure and services that were formerly the province of government. Public-private partnership arrangements between government and the private sector have undermined democratic public institutions because the commercial relationships are inherently secretive, unaccountable and often very risky.

Further, public administrative values such as responsibility of staff to elected officials, accountability to the public of elected officials, transparency, public consultation, open government and parliament's 'power of the purse' have increasingly been supplanted by concepts such as investor confidence, commercial confidentiality, stability for investors, proprietary ownership of information and assets, commercial sensitivity, trade secrets, protection of shareholders and competitive procurement rules. This language change reflects a fundamental shift in the nature of our Westminster-based system of responsible government.

Over the past decade we have seen countless examples of the ways PPPs are eroding our democratic public institutions. In 2017, an investigation was undertaken by the Griffith Business School to test the extent of Australian state performance audits into PPPs by Australia's auditors-general. Of the 11 categories of PPPs only four—road, rail, health and correctional—have had performance audits done in three jurisdictions: New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. Over a 22-year period, only 16—12.6 per cent—individual PPP projects have been audited by an auditor-general in Australia. Most have therefore not been subject to any independent oversight. New South Wales has performance audited eight out of a total of 30 PPP projects, Victoria has audited seven of a total of 49 projects, and Western Australia one out of a total of 12 projects. Significantly, no performance audits have been conducted in Queensland, despite the large number of PPPs the state government has entered into and their enormous cost to the Queensland taxpayer. In New South Wales five of the performance audits relate to six toll roads, three of these were requested by the New South Wales parliament. Although there is a legislative prohibition on auditors-general commenting on government policy, one New South Wales auditor-general, in two separate audits, questioned the government's assumption that private toll roads resulted in effective public policy outcomes.

Public-private partnerships present unique challenges to governments and auditors-general. The record of Australian auditors-general to date has been patchy. In Queensland, no performance audit on these arrangements has been done at all. I think it is time parliament called on the Auditor-General to conduct one here in Queensland.