




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take note

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.10 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Economics and Governance Committee report No. 44. I thank the members of the committee from both sides of the House and the secretariat for the preparation of the report. I would also like to place on record my thanks to the Auditor-General, Brendan Worrall, and his staff for their constant and rigorous production of Auditor-General reports that shine a light and try to keep this government accountable.

The report deals with several Queensland audit reports: *State entities 2021*; *Appointing and renewing government boards*; *Improving grants management*—which is a significant frustration for many local governments in Queensland—*Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery*; *2022 status of Auditor-General recommendations*; and *Managing workforce agility in the Queensland public sector*. The area that really does concern local governments in Queensland is improving grants management. It is particularly important for local governments. The frustrations that they experience have been raised with me on a number of occasions. I do wish to note that local government elections are on next Saturday and I would like to thank all the mayors and councillors for their service to their communities over the last four years. I look forward to working with the new mayors and councillors.

In relation to improving grants management, the Queensland Audit Office has made a number of recommendations and they are in the committee report for all to read. The committee report states—

The QAO noted that the Department of State Development, Industry, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP) was commencing a program to improve grant maturity across government, and that other identified collaborative initiatives and options for whole-of-government consistency in grants management are 'an important step towards building greater consistency, economies of scale, and flexibility'.

It might interest the House to know that the local government department has already spent \$1.3 million on their local government grants management system and, although there have been some changes in the local government department, that has not been reflected across other agencies and departments. The reform that was started—and there was quite a lot of discussion about that for local government—they were looking forward to seeing a lot of things being standardised. It only happened in one department. It was not translated across all of the departments of the state government. We have also seen that there has been consultants: KPMG. They have made a very significant report into local government grants. Local governments tell me that some of these grants that are causing them a lot of time to acquire are often the smallest grants. Local governments have actually singled out the library grants. Some of those are quite small grants, they are only a couple of thousand dollars, and they have said they are most time consuming for their staff. Their staff really should be out there delivering services for the community, but unfortunately they are actually wading through a mountain of applications and reporting and paperwork and different time frames.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Member for Logan, cease your interjections, please.

Ms LEAHY: It is ratepayers' money that is going to deal with the frequency and complexity of so many different grants across various different departments. The reporting frequencies and due dates across different government departments are an absolute juggling act for local government. For instance, the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme reports monthly five days prior to the end of the month, including a payment claim on a spreadsheet. The Rail Trail Local Government Grants are reported as requested to the department on email. The under-5's literacy First 5 Forever grants and the State Library allocations are ad hoc reporting and it takes council staff up to three days to complete the reporting. Some of the grants are only worth \$2,000 so there are actually more staff hours and cost involved in reporting that grant than what the grant is actually worth. This Labor government has taken some years and they are only just now starting to look at some grant standardisation.

Labor have been asleep at the wheel when it comes to looking at grants to local government. Queenslanders deserve better, local government deserves better and Labor should be shown the door in '24.