




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (2.52 pm): I rise to make my contribution in relation to the committee's report No. 44, *Examination of Auditor-General reports*. As has been indicated, report No. 44 examines a number of the Auditor-General's reports, two of which I want to touch on in the brief time that I have this afternoon.

QAO report No. 2 was in relation to improving grants management. I think grants and local grants across a number of departments are near and dear to all MPs' hearts, as there is nothing better than hearing of one of your local organisations being the recipient of a grant, whether they be our sporting clubs, community clubs, small businesses or one of a range of really important community members and assets. It is interesting to note the regional distribution of state government grant payments. During the audit period South-East Queensland, which has 73 per cent of the state's population, received only 32 per cent of all state government grants, whereas areas of the regions outside of South-East Queensland received 44.3 per cent.

Mrs Gilbert: Hear, hear!

Mrs McMAHON: I take that interjection. The member for Mackay believes that is how it should be. I note that, during that time, outside South-East Queensland, Townsville, Cairns and Whitsundays did get a large portion of that, which included a lot of the COVID job recovery. Considering the big concentration of tourism industry there, that is understandable. Twenty-two per cent of grants go for statewide purposes. Every time I now hear that we need to be spending more money in regional Queensland, I will note that most of the grant money already goes to regional Queensland.

Honourable members interjected.

Mrs McMAHON: Excellent! All of those members who agree to that should feel free to add their name to the end of the list of speakers on this report so they can vouch for that as well.

The other audit report I want to talk to is one that the member for Logan touched on: report No. 3, *Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery*. We all know, and I am certainly a firm believer, that our strong health response to the pandemic has been the major cause for our strong economic recovery. The Audit Office's report actually backs this in. I will note that the six examined initiatives, together with the containment of the COVID-19 case numbers and the economic stimulus from all levels of government, contributed to a faster than expected economic recovery through to December 2021. It is not just members on this side of the House standing up and repeating the often heard line that our strong health response has led to a strong economic response; the Queensland Audit Office has backed that in.

In relation to the economic stimulus, I note that one of the earlier reports by the QAO specifically looked at a case study—and I know that there was a lot of concern about the number of stimulus packages that went out. They did go out very quickly; they had to go out rapidly because there were jobs and businesses that were at risk. Obviously, with stimulus packages coming out that quickly, there was always a risk that they would not be targeted correctly or that there would be some financial risk, particularly in relation to the loans. However, the Audit Office found that approximately 95 per cent of the recipients were identified as having a minimal-to-low or average-to-moderate credit risk rating and, following that, that the majority of loan recipients were complying with the repayment schedules. I would like to put on record my faith in those businesses that did put their hand up and ask for some support, that they did so in good faith and continue to make their repayments in good faith. Knowing that those decisions had to be made rapidly to keep our businesses afloat and our communities and their jobs intact, the Queensland Audit Office has confirmed that in the majority of cases it was the right decision to make.