




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.47 pm): It is a pleasure for me to rise as the deputy chair of what is now the CoLE Committee to speak on our committee's report No. 44 on Auditor-General reports. The Auditor-General reported on seven important issues, and the member for Logan has outlined one. There were quite a few others, including state entities, appointing boards, improving grants management and the issuing of grants, the status of Auditor-General recommendations, and managing workforce agility in terms of moving from one particular area to the other.

It is a very important role, and Mr Brendan Worrall does a fantastic job as our Auditor-General in putting forward these reports for the committee to consider in the first instance and then for the House to consider so that we can shine a light on government behaviour. That is a very important fact, particularly with this government. The audit reports come out with the facts, the truth and, as he insists himself, transparency in terms of their delivery of government services and government financial accounting matters. He said in one of his reports that it is very important to strengthen governance and oversight arrangements. Basically, the Auditor-General's report said that the government needed to adopt in the audit committees in their own departments the fact that they were not independent and they needed to embrace further technology and advise departments on better reporting. I think he has 111 outstanding recommendations that are still to be implemented throughout the government departments, and that is an important part of the future direction of those departments. It is a wonderful opportunity for the Auditor-General to report directly in an unbiased manner, take all the politics out of it and come back to this House with the facts of the matter.

I will take the opportunity to comment that, in terms of the Auditor-General's job, there had been a bit of a movement, if you like—because he is very concerned about maintaining his independence—towards the EGC having oversight, particularly towards the budgetary matters. I find that very difficult as, the way they are set up, portfolio committees are not independent committees. That is just a fact. The portfolio committees can take a direction from the government members of the day, by virtue of the voting numbers on that committee. For a committee that has held a lot of its discussions in private, that makes it very difficult for independence and transparency to be highlighted through committee processes. Mr Worrall, the Auditor-General, is very concerned about any transfer of direction that may come through government with regard to budgetary matters—in other words, tightening up the moneys they can spend or the direction in which those things can go in terms of his role as an independent auditor.

I think Mr Worrall finishes up in the short term, as his time will be expiring. He has done an excellent job in bringing those reports—report 44 is just one of them—to the House in a very unbiased and, I think as the member for Logan indicated previously, apolitical way, as per his charter. I am very supportive of the continuation of the independence of Mr Worrall and, particularly following him, the Auditor-General's office, and I certainly support wholeheartedly the report that is being considered by the House today.