




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 28 August 2025

GOVERNANCE, ENERGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.04 pm): I rise to speak to the report by the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee, or the GEF Committee as we know it. The work of the Auditor-General is obviously very important to the operation of government here in Queensland. I will echo some of the comments from the member for Coomera. I think it shows that Queensland does have a healthy set of books. I think one could say that this government has inherited a pretty robust situation.

It shows that expenditure has grown but it shows that revenue is relatively consistent. There has been an increase in the value of our investments, but that is mirrored by, as we have heard, an increase in net debt and that is because of borrowings for our capital projects. It is no surprise that net debt will increase as we build more infrastructure here in Queensland, and that is very clear in report No. 12. It is something that I think this government needs to keep in mind. If we are to get the infrastructure that we need for our booming population, we have to fund it, and funding it through borrowings is, I believe, one of the most secure ways to do that. I represent part of South-East Queensland, which in Australia is clearly booming. There are enormous population pressures from interstate in our region, in Moreton Bay, and there are very clear pressures on our infrastructure. We really do need that infrastructure.

Members know that I was first in council in 2000. I spent 12 years in council and we wrestled with infrastructure back then and the question of how we pay for it. Always in council you are wrestling with the issue of how do we pay for the infrastructure that we need? We know now that the pressures of building infrastructure are more acute than ever. We have all seen around the world how the price of shipping has doubled, almost tripled, over a number of years. The price of steel has doubled. The price of concrete has gone through the roof. It is not only that but the pressures of getting the infrastructure built. There are real delays in getting experienced companies and personnel to do that. The cost of labour is probably only a small component of that.

This report reminds us that, yes, there are pressures on net debt but the pressures for infrastructure are so much larger. They are everyday pressures for our people. It is a case of we just have to do it. We just have to build it if it is really important. In Queensland we have always built this infrastructure, funded through public debt. In the 19th century, when Queensland built the incredible network of railways that we have now, we probably had the highest debt in the world. We went railway crazy. We had an enormous level of debt, but over 150 years later that investment is bearing fruit every day.

One of the other parts of the report—and I note and echo what the member for Coomera has said—is about control systems. I think one of the most valuable contributions the Queensland Audit Office has made over recent years is to draw our attention to potential deficiencies in control systems. We need to get payroll secure. We need to get procurement secure. We especially need to get IT secure. The chair knows exactly for how many years we have dealt with this topic in reports. It is not only government departments but councils as well.

For any government entity in Queensland, cybersecurity is important now more than ever. We need to keep our assets and our funds secure in a world where cyber theft is constantly threatening us. Cybersecurity is one of those areas that I hope the Audit Office will keep investigating and will continue to raise the issue of how much we need to improve in that area. There are deficiencies, but we always encourage our government entities to make sure that the work they do is secure.

I am also pleased to see that we are issuing green bonds for investments to mitigate climate change. I know that we have to keep an eye on the impact of climate change on our infrastructure and services in the future.