

# A. Entity responses

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As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to Department of Employment, Small Business and Training; Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning; Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority; and Queensland Treasury.

This appendix contains the detailed responses we received.

The heads of these entities are responsible for the accuracy, fairness, and balance of their comments.



# Comments received from Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities



The Hon Mark Furner MP  
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries  
and Minister for Rural Communities

Our ref: CTS 10478/22  
Your ref: PRJ02775

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Email agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

7 July 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall  
Auditor General  
Queensland Audit Office  
qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2022 regarding your proposed report to Parliament on *Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery* (the Report) and the opportunity to provide a response.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) supports the work being undertaken by the Queensland Audit Office and looks forward to continuing to work with you.

The economic response and recovery initiatives that are the subject of the Report played a vital role in supporting Queensland businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic, including businesses in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. This ensured that our food and fibre supply chains continued to function, keeping food on Queenslanders' tables and maintaining our export industries and regional jobs.

The speed at which these initiatives were implemented was critical to their success and is a credit to the entities that played a role in designing and delivering them, including the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) and DAF.

The need to ensure that public funds are used effectively and efficiently remains a high priority and I can advise that I support the recommendations you have made about designing, delivering, evaluating and monitoring rapid response initiatives. I note that, in general, the responsibility for implementing these recommendations will lie primarily with the department that owns the initiative, in collaboration with the delivery agency.

You can be confident that both DAF as an owner of initiatives such as these, and QRIDA as a delivery agency, will take your recommendations into account in the design and delivery of future initiatives of this type.



I also refer you to the detailed response to your draft report that was provided by QRIDA.

If you require further information, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



**MARK FURNER MP**  
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and  
Minister for Rural Communities

## Comments received from Under Treasurer, Queensland Treasury



Queensland Treasury

Our Ref: 02501-2022

Mr Brendan Worrall  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
PO Box 15396  
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Email: [QAO.Mail@qao.qld.gov.au](mailto:QAO.Mail@qao.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2022 seeking Queensland Treasury's formal response to your proposed report to parliament *Managing Queensland's COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery*.

COVID-19 was an extraordinary and unprecedented health and economic crisis, with developments happening by the hour at the start of the pandemic. As you have noted in previous correspondence, the Queensland and Australian economies were potentially facing an economic meltdown of epic proportions without government intervention, the likes of which have not been seen since the Great Depression.

In the absence of immediate and substantial government intervention by the State and Federal governments, many respected economists and experts were predicting unprecedented numbers of business closures and unemployment rates to reach almost record levels.

The response of the Queensland Government and the hard work and resilience of Queenslanders ensured the success of the government's numerous programs to support the Queensland economy continued to be strong and robust, by providing assistance to individuals, communities, businesses and industries to survive the pandemic.

Queensland's successful response has been recognised nationally and globally. On almost every key economic indicator, Queensland outperformed the rest of Australia and other major states in terms of the speed and strength of its economic recovery.

With respect to your report, I note Recommendations 1 through 5. Treasury will continue to support lead delivery entities in the design and delivery of current and future rapid response initiatives.

I also acknowledge the report's recommendation for Queensland Treasury to enhance the oversight of the portfolio of COVID-19 economic response and recovery initiatives (Recommendation 6).

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The work on this report commenced in September 2021. There has been substantial work undertaken by the QAO and Queensland Treasury to ensure the report accurately reflected the unprecedented economic environment the Government was operating in and the speed and magnitude of response required in developing and delivering the support needed.

We value the assistance the QAO gave the Government with respect to the design and implementation of several programs delivered by departments at the start of the pandemic.

The work undertaken by QAO in reviewing a sample of the COVID-19 initiatives with a view of identifying learnings from the process is well received. As noted above, it is critical that the findings of this review and any assessment of the initiatives delivered throughout the course of the pandemic, were carefully considered in the context of an unprecedented health and economic crisis.

Given the Queensland Government response to COVID-19 has moved from an emergency response to a rebuild and recovery to a growth phase, Treasury is taking steps to finalise the process of collecting quarterly information from agencies on their COVID-19 expenditure and activity. Treasury oversight of COVID-19 initiatives will continue, but through standard fiscal monitoring processes.

If you require any further information, please contact [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] who will be pleased to assist.

[REDACTED] has also provided to your office feedback on the report on behalf of Treasury for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



Leon Allen  
**Under Treasurer**

8 / 7 / 2022

## Comments received from Director-General, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training



Department of  
Employment,  
Small Business  
and Training

Our ref: 01241/22

Mr Brendan Worrall  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
Email: [gao.mail@gao.qld.gov.au](mailto:gao.mail@gao.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2022 regarding the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) report *Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery*.

As indicated in your report, the Queensland Government moved swiftly to provide a pipeline of support for small businesses and impacted Queenslanders throughout the pandemic, ranging from grant programs to support continuity of trade through to providing skills responses to enhance employment prospects.

Importantly, the Government's strong health and economic response to the pandemic has meant Queenslanders remained safe and that Queensland's economic recovery was front of mind from the outset.

The Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) has reviewed the QAO's final draft report and I enclose a copy of the Response to Recommendations. DESBT agrees with the recommendations and will incorporate the recommendations as per this response.

Should you require any further information, please contact [REDACTED]

I thank you and your team for this important piece of work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warwick Ahnew".

Warwick Ahnew  
Director-General

5 / 7 / '22

Enc: Response to Recommendations

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## Responses to recommendations



### Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

#### Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery

Response to recommendations provided by Mr Warwick Agnew, Director-General, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training on 6 July 2022

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<i>We recommend that, for future initiatives, lead delivery entities:</i>			
1. ensure the needs of target users are considered throughout the life of the initiatives – that is, during design, implementation, and monitoring	Agree	Completed	DESBT has used learnings, including participant feedback and data, from the Small Business COVID-19 Adaption Grant to inform future programs e.g. Big Plans for Small Business grants programs and the 2021 COVID-19 Business Support Grants program. This will be ongoing for future programs as well.
2. ensure their risk management has a key focus on risks to achieving the objectives of the initiatives	Agree	Ongoing	DESBT considers risks in the design phase of initiatives. A focus on risk management for future programs is ongoing.
3. enhance inter-agency collaboration to explore ways of sharing information and external data within legislative requirements to improve uptake rates and prevent ineligible applications being approved	Agree	Ongoing	Where possible, in line with legislative ability to share information, DESBT's program design stages will take into consideration any available data sharing models that can be adopted. Moving forward, inter-agency data sharing and privacy constraints will be considered in the stakeholder consultation stage of program design.
4. consult with relevant stakeholders to identify all key target users and ensure communications about the initiatives reach these users	Agree	Ongoing	DESBT's program design stages will encompass research on users and overall benefit to Queenslanders. Communication strategies and target users will be clearly defined for future programs.

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
5. evaluate the extent to which each initiative achieves its objectives and use this information to direct initiatives as they progress and in designing future initiatives	Agree	Ongoing	DEBT's program design will consider, and inform evaluation stages over the life of future programs. A program logic, which includes consideration of strategic intent, key objectives, deliverables, intended outcomes as well as KPIs, will underpin each new initiative.



## Comments received from Acting Director-General, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning



Department of  
**State Development, Infrastructure,  
Local Government and Planning**

Our ref: MC22/2466

5 JUL 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2022 to the Honourable Steven Miles MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure about the Proposed Report titled *Managing Queensland's COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery*. The Deputy Premier has asked me to respond on his behalf on this occasion.

With the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and the need for a rapid response, your report has summarised lessons for current and future rapid response initiatives. It also suggests all entities leading the delivery of rapid response initiatives use these recommendations to improve the design and management of future initiatives.

As one of the lead delivery entities in scope for this audit, I note some recommendations apply to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning's (the department) COVID-19 Works for Queensland program (COVID-19 W4Q) which my department will consider and apply for future grant program funding rounds. The department will also work to consider your recommendations for other future rapid response initiatives and incorporate in our grants maturity improvement project as applicable.

I wish to thank your team for their proactive engagement with my officers throughout this audit and for acknowledging strengths with COVID-19 W4Q during the conduct stage.

If you require any further information, please contact [redacted] in the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, by [redacted] who will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Natalie Wilde".

Natalie Wilde  
**Acting Director-General**

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## Comments received from Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority



**Queensland Rural and  
Industry Development  
Authority**

6 July 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall  
Auditor General  
Queensland Audit Office  
qao.mail@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2022 regarding your proposed report to Parliament on *Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery* (the Report) and the opportunity to provide a response.

The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) appreciates the opportunity provided to work with the Queensland Audit Office in reviewing its response via the COVID-19 Jobs Support Loans as the delivery agency on behalf of the Queensland Government.

QRIDA is immensely proud of the role that it played in being able to quickly and efficiently distribute approximately \$1 billion in loan funds to almost 7000 Queensland businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and assisting them during the difficult economic conditions at that time to retain the employment of approximately 86,000 employees. QRIDA also looks forward to working with these businesses throughout the ongoing administration of these loans over the coming eight years.

As the delivery agency, QRIDA is supportive of the recommendations provided in the Report. Please find attached QRIDA's response to the recommendations (Attachment A).

If you have any queries regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cameron MacMillan".

Cameron MacMillan  
Chief Executive Officer

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## Responses to recommendations



### Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority

#### Managing Queensland's COVID-19 economic response and recovery

Response to recommendations provided by

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
We recommend that, for future initiatives, lead delivery entities:			
1. ensure the needs of target users are considered throughout the life of the initiatives – that is, during design, implementation, and monitoring	Agree	At time of program design and delivery	QRIDA relies on the program guidelines and regulation provided by the Program Owner to determine the role QRIDA is engaged to fulfil.
2. ensure their risk management has a key focus on risks to achieving the objectives of the initiatives	Agree	At time of program commencement	QRIDA will include in each Program Risk Register.
3. enhance inter-agency collaboration to explore ways of sharing information and external data within legislative requirements to improve uptake rates and prevent ineligible applications being approved	Agree	At time of program design and delivery	QRIDA will collaborate with Program Owners to determine requirements for data and information sharing, which will inform the Memorandum of Understanding.
4. consult with relevant stakeholders to identify all key target users and ensure communications about the initiatives reach these users	Agree	At time of program design	QRIDA collaborates with Program Owners as to whether they wish to engage QRIDA to deliver these services.
5. evaluate the extent to which each initiative achieves its objectives and use this information to direct initiatives as they progress and in designing future initiatives	Agree	At completion of program	QRIDA considers this a Program Owner responsibility. Program Owners decide whether they engage QRIDA to undertake these activities.

