Examination of Auditor-General Report No. 1: 2018-19
Monitoring and managing ICT projects

Transport and Public Works Committee

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Acknowledgements

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Contents

Abbreviations

CBRC	Cabinet Budget Review Committee
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIO	Chief Information Officer
the committee	Transport and Public Works Committee (56th Parliament)
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DCDSS	Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors
DCSYW	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
DDG DISC	Deputy Director-General Digital & ICT Steering Committee
DE	Department of Education
DES	Department of Environment and Science
DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
DHPW/department	Department of Housing and Public Works
DIGITAL 1ST	The Queensland Government digital strategy for 2017-2021
DITID	Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games
DLGRMA	Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DNRME	Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
DPC	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
DSDMIP	Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
DSITE	Former Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
ESC	Executive Steering Committee
HCM	Human capital management
HRIS	Human Resources Information Solutions

ICT	information and communication technology
IGEM	Inspector-General of Emergency Management
MOG	Machinery of govenment
MyDAS	My Development Assessment System
PRINCE2	an acronym for **PR**ojects **IN C**ontrolled **E**nvironments – is a process-based method for project management
PSBA	Public Safety Business Agency
QAO	Queensland Audit Office
QCS	Queensland Corrective Services
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
QGEA	Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture
QH	Queensland Health
QGCIO	Queensland Government Chief Information Office
QPS	Queensland Police Service
QT	Queensland Treasury

Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the Transport and Public Works Committee's examination of the Auditor-General Report No. 1: 2018-19- *Monitoring and managing ICT projects.*

The committee is satisfied that departments are taking appropriate action to address the Auditor-General's recommendations and has recommended that the Legislative Assembly notes the contents of this report.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Queensland Audit Office for its assistance with the committee's examination. I also thank officers from Queensland Government Chief Information Office and the Department of Housing and Public Works for their assistance in providing both oral and written advice in a timely manner.

I commend this report to the House.

Shane King MP

Chair

Recommendations

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Transport and Public Works Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 15 February 2018 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.[1]

The committee's primary areas of responsibility are:

- Transport and Main Roads

- Housing, Public Works, Digital Technology and Sport.

The committee has responsibility within its portfolio areas for the assessment of the integrity, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government financial management by:

- examining government financial documents, and

- considering the annual and other reports of the Auditor-General.[2]

1.2 Role of the Auditor-General

The role of the Auditor-General is to provide Parliament with independent assurance of public sector accountability and performance. This is achieved through reporting to Parliament on the results of its financial and performance audits.

A financial audit assesses whether the information contained in the financial statements of public sector entities is accurate, can be relied upon and is prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and relevant legislative requirements.[3]

A performance audit evaluates whether an agency or government program is achieving its objectives effectively, economically and efficiently, and is compliant with relevant legislation. It does not consider the merits of government policy. Rather, it focuses on how that policy is implemented.[4]

1.3 Referral of the Auditor-General Report

Standing Order 194B provides the Committee of the Legislative Assembly shall as soon as practicable after a report of the Auditor-General is tabled in the Assembly, refer that report to the relevant portfolio committee for consideration. The Auditor-General Report was referred to the committee on 23 August 2018.

A portfolio committee may deal with this type of referral by considering and reporting on the matter and making recommendations about it to the Assembly.

The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) Report No. 1: 2018-19, titled *'Monitoring and managing ICT projects'* (Auditor-General Report) was prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009* and was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in accordance with section 67 of that Act on 10 July 2018 and an erratum to page 93 of the report was tabled on 26 July 2018. The Auditor-General's report presents the results of the QAO's performance audit.

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[1]   *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

[2]   *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 94(1)(a).

[3]   Queensland Audit Office (QAO) Practice Statement – Financial statement audit, p 1.

[4]   QAO Factsheet - About us, p 2.

1.4   Examination process

The committee received a public briefing from the QAO on 29 October 2018. The committee also met with the Queensland Government Chief Information Office (QGCIO) and officers from the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) on 29 October 2018. See Appendix A for a list of witnesses. Copies of the transcripts from these briefings can be accessed on the committee's webpage.

In April 2019, the committee also wrote to DHPW and all departments seeking an update on various matters, including the progress on implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendations. Responses were received from all departments.

1.5   Recommendations and conclusions

The committee is satisfied that appropriate action is being taken to address the recommendations made by the Auditor-General.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly note the contents of this report.

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2 Examination of the Auditor-General's report

2.1 Audit rationale

The Auditor-General Report assessed whether the information and communication technology (ICT) dashboard is a reliable source of information and whether there are effective processes to monitor, manage, and enable successful delivery of selected ICT programs and project outcomes. The audit considered two programs/projects in detail: the Human Resources Information Solutions (HRIS) program and the My Development Assessment System (MyDAS) project.

The audit explored whether monitoring projects at the departmental and whole-of-government levels has improved successful delivery of ICT programs and projects. The audit assessed whether the:

- ICT dashboard is a reliable source of information and has increased transparency of how departments are running their projects

- whole-of-government assurance processes are improving departmental skill levels in monitoring and managing ICT projects

- governance processes for one program – HRIS – and one completed project – MyDAS – were effective.

The audit scope included detailed review and analysis of the ICT dashboard and surveyed all departmental chief information officers on their use of the ICT dashboard.

The audit objective was addressed through the following sub-objectives, lines of inquiry and audit criteria[5]:

Sub-objective	Lines of inquiry	Criteria
Assess how well the ICT dashboard increases transparency of ICT programs and projects and the ICT risks from legacy systems	▪ Does the dashboard provide public visibility of the status of Queensland Governments ICT programs and projects?	▪ The criteria for projects and programs to be included in the ICT dashboard are clear and well defined. ▪ The dashboard includes all major ICT programs and projects across the sector. ▪ The dashboard shows accurate status of programs and projects. ▪ Departments are consistent in applying the criteria for publishing data on the dashboard. ▪ Stakeholders are satisfied with the information and find the ICT dashboard useful. ▪ The departments regularly update the data for the ICT dashboard
	▪ As stage 2 of the dashboard was not implemented, what alternative arrangements are in place to improve transparency of the status of ICT risk?	▪ The action item to implement risk reporting as stage two of the dashboard was monitored and managed. ▪ There is a process in place to monitor the progress of risk mitigation activities for ICT risk within government. ▪ Governance processes use information on ICT risk to prioritise investment

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[5] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, pp 111-112.

Sub-objective	Lines of inquiry	Criteria
Evaluate how well whole-of-government processes and frameworks contribute to the successful delivery of projects	▪ Are there effective governance processes in place for measuring the performance of the ICT strategy through the dashboard?	▪ The major programs and projects within the ICT strategy are reported in the dashboard. ▪ There are processes in place to objectively monitor the performance of the ICT strategy through the dashboard.
	▪ How effective are the whole-of-government processes for review and assurance of major programs and projects?	▪ QGCIO's list of programs and projects that fit the criteria is complete and accurate. ▪ QGCIO uses the necessary tools in its assurance process. ▪ Assurance reports are timely, and departments use these to facilitate successful delivery of programs and projects.

2.2   Audit background and context

In 2013 the government announced that departments would provide high-level overviews and status updates of major ICT investment through an ICT dashboard. The report notes that this announcement was made in response to some high-profile ICT project failures and the target audience for the dashboard is the public. The ICT dashboard is intended to make information about ICT projects easily accessible, visible and available for use by the public in a timely manner. It is also intended to make it easier to identify underperforming projects and to focus action on the projects that need it most.

Legislation requires each department to be accountable for managing major ICT projects and departments use approved program and project management methodologies, including assessment frameworks. The QGCIO designed the dashboard to make it easy to see all significant ICT projects and understand how they are tracking at a glance. The QGCIO is the custodian of the ICT dashboard.

The QGCIO has developed and communicated comprehensive guidelines to help departments to decide which projects to report. However, it is not mandatory for departments to comply with these guidelines.

The QGCIO defines a project to be a substantial activity that departments undertake to improve their services. The definition was deliberately kept at a high level so that it can include both programs and projects.

The ICT dashboard was included in the *Queensland Government Strategy 2013-17 action plan* (the ICT strategy) published in August 2013. It was proposed that ICT dashboard would be developed in two stages with the stage 1 to include all agencies reporting on the status of major government ICT projects to be published on the dashboard on a regular basis by November 2013. Stage 2 was to be completed by August 2014 and include additional information, including the status of ICT risk within the Queensland Government and progress of mitigation activities.[6]

QAO reported that stage 2 of the dashboard was not implemented due to the Queensland Government Chief Information Office (QGCIO) not receiving approval to progress to stage 2. Stage 2 of the dashboard was intended to report progress against the ICT strategy. The government replaced the ICT strategy with the *Queensland Government Digital Strategy 2017-2017 – Digital 1ST Advancing our digital future* (DIGITAL 1ST strategy) which was published in July 2017.

The report notes that each department is accountable for making investment decisions and monitoring and delivering on its investments – including the ICT projects and programs. Entities at the whole-of-government level, such as the QGCIO and the ICT Director-General Council also play significant roles in providing assurance and oversight of investments in ICT projects.

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[6] Queensland Government, *Queensland Government ICT Strategy Action Plan 2013-17*, August 2013, p65

2.2.1   Background on program and project considered in detail

As noted above, the audit included consideration in detail of one program and one project. The background on the program and project is as follows:

- The HRIS program was initially established in 2010 to replace the outdated Lattice payroll system at Queensland Corrective Services (QCS), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Inspector-General of Emergency Management (IGEM). However, the program subsequently evolved during its planning to a fully integrated payroll and human capital management (HCM) solution.

    In September 2012, a budget of $100 million over four years (2015-16) was approved. After a change of government policy in March 2015, the program changed and the responsibility for the program transitioned from the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) to the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation (DSITI). Since the machinery of government (MOG) changes in January 2018, the program now reports to DHPW.

    Refer section 3.3.5.1 of this report for further consideration of this program.

- The MyDAS project was an online system that allowed applicants to lodge development applications where the state is the assessment manager or referral agency. It supported applications under the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*. Development of the project began in 2014 and the current version (MyDAS2) was launched in July 2017. MyDAS2 supports development applications under the *Planning Act 2016*. The project involved three iterations:

    - the first project ran for six months but delivered a system that had significant problems

    - the second project was established in 2014 to fix the issues from the first project and enhance the system, making progress but not delivering a fully functioning system

    - the third project delivered a functioning system and incorporated legislative changes of the Planning Act.

    The main functions of the system enables include:

    - lodging, tracking, and paying fees for development applications online

    - integrating with a development assessment mapping system

    The need for developing the system arose because development applications for land involve several government entities, including local government, which can be confusing for customers, resulting in processing delays. Customers also did not have an easy way to track the status of their applications.

2.3   Audit conclusions

QAO concluded that:

- The Queensland Government has improved the governance processes for ICT projects and programs since 2013. The QGCIO has designed the ICT dashboard and made it available to the public. It has also implemented some additional investment and assurance review processes.

- The ICT dashboard enables transparency about the number and planned cost of major projects across departments.

- QAO found that there are several weaknesses with the completeness and controls over the accuracy of the content within the dashboard, resulting in reduced user confidence in its reliability.

- There is inconsistency in the information that departments publish about their projects because it is not mandatory for them to follow the QGCIO's guidelines for the dashboard.

- The completeness, accuracy and inconsistency issues detract from the usefulness and reliability of information for the public.

- QAO also concluded that the monitoring of major ICT programs through the assurance process at the whole-of-government level is not being carried out as well as it could be. The whole-of-government and departmental governing bodies are not using the information they have available through the new processes to increase the success rate of ICT programs and projects.

- QAO concluded that valuable information obtained through the QGCIO's gate reviews is not being effectively used to minimise the repetition of mistakes.

- QAO concluded that there are still significant challenges at the departmental level to improve the successful delivery of ICT projects.

- QAO found the review of projects – the HRIS program and the MyDAS series of projects – demonstrated that keeping programs and projects running while significantly policy, structural and legislative changes are occurring contributes to slow progress and high delivery costs.

- QAO concluded that timely project decision-making needs to occur when changing projects in order to reduce the inefficient use of public funding.[7]

2.4   Audit recommendations

The Auditor-General has made eight recommendations as follows:

For QGCIO:

1. enhance the ICT dashboard and update the publishing guidelines by:

   - working with departments to publish one set of agreed criteria and supporting guidelines to be used by all departments

   - considering an increase in the estimated cost criteria of projects to be reported

   - including projects funded to initiate and/or to develop a business case, with timelines and budgets for the initiate stage

   - including the ability to explain changes in projects in the delivery stage and provide information on outcomes and outputs achieved to date

   - requiring departments to include more information about key decisions and corrective actions for projects that change significantly (re-set or re-baseline)

   - automating controls to validate data when it is entered

   - expanding features on the dashboard to include links between projects, programs and the DIGITAL 1ST strategy.

2. strengthen whole-of-government assurance frameworks that currently complement departmental processes for monitoring ICT projects by:

   - defining the meanings of ICT, digital, or digitally-enabled projects, and projects with high business impact

   - reporting projects that are defined as high business impact and have not undergone the investment review process

   - analysing and reporting ICT project performance information to assess the effectiveness of the investment review and project assurance processes

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[7]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 12.

- encouraging departments to schedule sufficient project health checks in addition to gate reviews in the assurance plans for all high business impact projects, and following up on these if they don't occur on time

- assisting departments in identifying root causes for project failures and successes, collating these, publishing information for learning, and encouraging departments to look for early warning signs so they can mitigate these risks.

For all departments:

3. Implement efficient and automated processes for collecting, collating, approving and publishing dashboard data.

4. Publish data to the dashboard that is consistent with the QGCIO publishing criteria and guidelines and provide sufficient detail in the explanatory notes when changes are made to projects' scope, time or budget.

5. Consider the need for projects with high business impact to undergo periodic health checks in addition to gate reviews and that the focus of these health checks includes the financial management.

6. Use learnings (including the QGCIO's summary of systemic issues) from project health checks and gate reviews in monitoring and managing programs and projects.

For DHPW:

For the HRIS program

7. Undertakes a full analysis of the relevant and end-to-end payroll and human capital management processes for the remaining entities:

    - to assess proposed solutions

    - to calculate cost estimates for the services.

8. Ensure the program continually assesses that it provides enough information to enable those charged with governance to make timely decisions.[8]

2.5   Agency responses to the audit

Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009* outlines that a copy of the report was required to be provided to the responsible Ministers and agencies. Responses were received from[9]:

- Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Queensland Treasury (QT)
- QGCIO
- DHPW
- PSBA
- QFES
- Queensland Police Service (QPS)
- QCS
- Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP)
- Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs (DLGRMA)

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[8]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, pp 13-14.

[9]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, pp 56-110

- Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR)
- Department of Education (DE)
- Queensland Health (QH)
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)
- Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (DNRME)
- Department of Environment and Science (DES)
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)
- Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games (DITID)
- Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT)
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW)
- Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS)
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP)

DPC, QT, PSBA, QFES, QPS, QCS, DSDMIP, DLGRMA, DTMR, DJAG, DNRME, DES, DAF, DITID, DESBT, DCSYW, DCDSS and DATSIP agreed with the recommendations numbered 3 to 6.

The QGCIO agreed with recommendations numbered 1 (dot point numbers 1 to 5 and 7) and 2 and agreed 'in-principle' with recommendation 1 (dot point number 6) and advised:

Overall QGCIO supports the recommendations defined for the ICT Dashboard and the whole-of-government assurance frameworks. Further analysis will be needed to assess whether there will be any practical limitations on the extent of the implementation.[10]

The Director-General, DHPW, supported the recommendations defined for the HRIS programs and for all departments to adopt.

The report contains copies of the formal responses received.

The Director-General, DPC, advised that:

Overall, the proposed report's findings and recommendations appear in line with Government's intention to increase transparency around major ICT projects, and to improve elements of governance to support ICT projects being delivered on time, on budget, and within agreed quality and performance requirements.[11]

The Director-General, DE, advised:

The department is not supportive of the addition of projects to the dashboard that are at idea definition or early business case stage of development as many of these do not make it to full project initiation. The department believes this may cause confusion and potentially mislead the market into thinking there are opportunities where they may not exist or materialise.

The department also notes that publication of financial information early in a project may compromise commercial negotiations and reserves the right to withhold publication until commercial negotiations are completed.

I note the existing guidelines developed by the Queensland Government Chief Information Office are guidelines for departmental use and as such are descriptive in nature and not prescriptive. The department is supportive of further clarification of these guidelines to improve consistency but at the same time recognises the different profile of agencies.[12]

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[10] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 61.

[11] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 57.

[12] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 85.

The Director-General, QH, advised:

The Department of Health (the Department) agrees with the recommendations as outlined in the audit report to:

- *automate the publishing of dashboard data;*

- *ensure compliance with the Queensland Government Chief Information Office (QGCIO) publishing criteria and guidelines;*

- *to undertake periodic health checks; and*

- *to incorporate the use of learnings as part of our project assurance processes.*

The Department notes the recommendation directed to the Queensland Government Chief Information Office (QGCIO) to review its publishing criteria and guidelines. Due to the size of Queensland Health this would significantly increase the reporting burden with little benefit, given relative risk, compared to the cost of implementation. The Department currently reports on 64 high-value initiatives, which is expected to increase naturally given the investment in digital hospitals. Should the threshold be lowered it is anticipated that this would add a materially significant number of low risk initiatives.[13]

The table contained in Appendix B details the timeframe for implementation of recommendations as advised to QAO.

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[13]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 87.

3 Issues considered

The committee considered a number of issues which are discussed below.

3.1 Role of QGCIO

The role of the QGCIO is to provide advice to Queensland Government agencies and executive government on issues such as:

- setting ICT strategy, policies and standards

- adopting better practice for ICT investment management

- identifying and managing risks, including 'over the horizon' risks

- developing proposals for major whole-of-government investments

- identifying and managing strategic workforce capability issues

- improving contract outcomes

- facilitating strategic relationships with industry partners.[14]

The Auditor-General's report notes that the QGCIO is the custodian of the ICT dashboard and has:

… published guidelines to help departments decide which projects to report. These guidelines don't prescribe what departments should and shouldn't publish; they simply guide them in making a choice.[15]

…

As is it not mandatory to comply with the QGCIO guidelines, each department decides which projects to report on the dashboard.[16]

The Auditor-General's report also notes that:

Directors-general are accountable for investment decisions and business activities in their departments. Within Queensland Government project management methodologies, senior responsible officers and project executives are accountable for ensuring there is adequate governance over projects to deliver intended outcomes.[17]

The revised guidelines detail that the QGCIO is responsible for custodianship and management of the Queensland Government Digital Projects Dashboard and its specific responsibilities are:

- *Coordinating the identification and implementation of any future review, changes or upgrades to the Queensland Government Digital Projects Dashboard*

- *Monitoring that the data for each agency is refreshed in line with agency reporting cycles, up to a maximum of eight weeks*

- *Liaising with Smart Service Queensland (SSQ) regarding any data related changes*

- *Managing any requests for change*

- *Responding to any media requests for the Queensland Government Digital Projects Dashboard*

- *Consulting with agency representatives on any global changes required*

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14   Queensland Government Information Office, 'About us', https://www.qgcio.qld.gov.au/about-us

15   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 15.

16   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 16.

17   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 17.

- *Checking for errors in data files and correcting those errors if agency representatives are not easily contactable*

- *Liaising with SSQ regarding any non-data related global changes required to static content, such as working on dashboard sites, glossary, FAQs, etc.[18]*

The committee sought advice from the QGCIO regarding available actions should departments ignore advice provided. The QGCIO advised:

In the traditional public sector way, I will advise and report. If I think it is important enough, I will go to their next level delegate. I do talk to DGs quite regularly. If it is important enough, I probably would go to the minister. I would certainly go through my minister to their minister; let's say that much.[19]

The QGCIO confirmed that his office provides two types of advice: standard guidance advice, including policy standard guidelines, which is publicly available on the website, and individual advice which is generally not published.[20]

The QGCIO also confirmed that his office does not intervene in projects. The QGCIO advised:

I provide advice to the senior responsible officer or the DG. I also provide advice into broader parts of government around some of those projects, but we do not make that public, no.[21]

With regard to the reasons individual advice is not made public, the QGCIO advised:

… because there are always complexities, my approach is, and the way we are approaching this is, more and more hoping that the agencies pick up the issues and fix them before they even get to that stage. It could be an unfair reflection on agencies that there has been external input. Depending on their maturity, they have picked up the issues and fixed them without needing that. In some senses while it might appear to be another piece of transparency, I would have to think about it more deeply, I suppose. I can also see some downsides of some of that, as I have talked about earlier. A lot of effectiveness is that ability to work with people and help them go through the process of fixing the problem, not being an external coming in. Human nature tends to be, I think, much better if we support them to fix their own problems not come in and try to fix them for them.[22]

The QGCIO also advised:

… all those projects you see on the dashboard, because of the policy that they actually have to bring their independent assurance to my team, I am providing advice to every one of those projects. From the other side, on a regular basis we are providing advice to all those projects.

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[18] Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019, p 6.

[19] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 10.

[20] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 14.

[21] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 14.

[22] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 14.

I cannot remember a situation where we advised a project should be stopped. We do give a lot of advice on adjusting how the project is delivered or its outcomes. My clear focus, formal focus, is about the governance and setting the projects up for success. We will, because of our expertise and knowledge that sits in the office, provide advice on some of the technology issues and some of the others, but a lot of our advice is also to Treasury and DPC as it goes through so at times that is the conversation route, not back to the agency, but I cannot remember one in which I have said, no, you should not do it. It is very difficult to find a project you should not do. The priority of investment and the priority across government is set in central agencies.[23]

3.2   Role of ICT dashboard

The Auditor-General's report notes that the QGCIO designed the ICT dashboard to make it easy to see all significant ICT projects and how they are tracking at a glance. At the time of the audit, the QGCIO defined a project to be a substantial activity that departments undertake to improve their services. The definition includes both programs and projects.[24]

The Digital Project Dashboard website states:

The Digital Project Dashboard visually presents digital project data published by each department on the Queensland Government Open Data Portal. This data is updated regularly by each department. Significant cross-government projects (referred to as Cross-Gov) are also displayed.

A project is a substantial activity undertaken by an agency to improve its services. It may also refer to a program – a group of related projects and change management activities that together achieve change for an organisation.

Each digital project is aligned to one or more digital priorities of the Queensland Government. The dashboard displays the primary digital priority of each project.

Projects are dynamic, and require flexibility for changing circumstances, to ensure they continue to deliver for the current needs of the business.[25]

The dashboard reports on projects based on the various stages of the project. The stage, and their definition, are:

- Initiate – detailed planning for the project is underway

- Delivery – the project's documentation has been approved and the project has started

- Closed – the project/program has delivered its outcomes and has closed

- Paused – the project has been temporarily put on hold

- Ended – work on the project has ended prematurely and a decision has been made to stop work.[26]

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23   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 15.

24   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 24.

25   Queensland Government, 'About Digital Projects Dashboard, https://www.qld.gov.au/digitalprojectsdashboard/about

26   Queensland Government, 'About Digital Projects Dashboard, https://www.qld.gov.au/digitalprojectsdashboard/about

Each stage is approved by project boards and resources committed before the project proceeds to the next stage. Each stage is a management decision point within a project to enable assessment of viability of the project in relation to its business case.[27] The QGCIO guidelines state that closed and ended projects are to remain on the ICT Dashboard for one publishing cycle.[28]

The dashboard also reports on the status of projects using a 'green', 'amber' and 'red' colour coding. The status reflects how a project is tracking. Each of the colour codes equates to the following:

- Green is 'On track'

- Amber is 'Closely monitored'

- Red is 'Action required'[29]

The department confirmed that project status is updated manually by agencies as part of each project's standard governance process.[30] The guidelines state that the project status attribute should be intuitive to the general public and agencies are strongly encouraged to provide the external status so the general public can understand the true nature of the project.[31]

The guidelines also state that:

Agencies should ensure that the 'Explanatory notes' field for each project reflects a clear and simple explanation of the reason for current status and a succinct history of the major changes to the project which have affected timeframe, cost, etc.[32]

3.3   Audit findings

This section outlines the key issues considered by the committee during the course of its inquiry.

3.3.1   Is the ICT dashboard a reliable source of information?

QAO identified issues with completeness and relevance, timeliness and comparability of the ICT dashboard during the audit. In particular, QAO identified:

- Thirty-two projects, with a total planned expenditure of $161.4 million, that were not on the ICT dashboard, but met the QGCIO guidelines for inclusion.

- There was no consistency in the data currency across the sector, and the main reason for this included that each department had its own processes to manage and monitor projects.

- There was inconsistency in how departments reported various attributes of their projects including publishing only those projects with approved budgets, which can be for one year or the entire project; publishing programs and not projects within the program; and reporting time and cost information on the stages of a project, rather than the whole project.[33]

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27   Queensland Government, 'About Digital Projects Dashboard, https://www.qld.gov.au/digitalprojectsdashboard/about

28   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, *Publishing guideline ICT Dashboard – Release 3*, October 2017, p 11.

29   Queensland Government, 'About Digital Projects Dashboard, https://www.qld.gov.au/digitalprojectsdashboard/about

30   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 2.

31   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019, p 11.

32   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019, p 11.

33   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 25.

QAO advised:

In 2013 government announced that departments would provide the public with high-level overviews of major ICT projects on the ICT dashboard. This dashboard is intended to make information easily accessible, visible and available for the public to use in a timely manner and to make it easier to identify underperforming projects so as to focus action on the projects that need it most.[34]

QAO confirmed that, whilst they consider governance processes have improved since 2013, they also consider additional work is required. QAO found:

The ICT dashboard enables transparency about projects, including the number and planned cost of major projects across departments. If we did not have that dashboard we would not have that level of transparency for the public; however, there are some weaknesses with completeness and controls over the accuracy of the content within the dashboard. There is inconsistency in the information that departments publish about their projects, as it is not mandatory for them to follow the QGCIO's guidelines for the dashboard. Most projects on the dashboard appear as 'on track' even though they have been in flight for a long period of time.

…

We found that there is insufficient information on the ICT dashboard about how the projects have changed over time and whether they have delivered benefits along the way. If a project has been ongoing for 10 years, what benefits have we already received? These issues detract from the usefulness and reliability of the information on the ICT dashboard for the public.[35]

The QGCIO advised:

The Digital Projects Dashboard, which is managed by my office, provides a whole-of-government summary of significant ICT enabled digital projects, as well as a breakdown of projects by department. At its core, the dashboard is designed to make it easier to see all significant digital ICT enabled projects and understand how they are tracking, including their status at a glance. However, it is important to note that the purpose of the dashboard is to be an easy-to-use high-level communications mechanism to the public on significant digital projects. It is not an exhaustive project reporting tool or internal project governance mechanism.[36]

The QGCIO confirmed that a public-facing dashboard has been in operation since late 2013 and has been regularly updated according to a planned roadmap of continual improvement. The QGCIO advised that:

The updates have improved public usability, and have taken advantage of agencies' growing maturity in data provision and transparency.[37]

The QGCIO also confirmed:

All agencies are responsible for publishing information to the dashboard in line with the agreed minimum data publishing guidelines. It is important for agencies to regularly update the dashboard and ensure the information in each program or project tells a coherent story. Highlighting the journey of a project, including significant variations in time and cost, provides the transparency that will instil confidence in our processes. All ministers and directors-general are aware of the dashboard and the agency's respective published projects.[38]

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[34]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 1.

[35]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[36]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 8.

[37]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 8.

[38]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 8.

The committee queried the reliability of the dashboard given that the audit found that some projects are not reported. QAO responded that whilst the audit identified that completeness was an issue for some projects, the projects that were on the ICT dashboard were accurate at the time they were published. QAO also advised that, for some long term projects, information around how the project had changed over time was not sufficiently reported.[39]

QAO also confirmed that the ICT dashboard process is a good process as it enables transparency of the projects and departments are getting better at it. QAO advised:

> *When we had no dashboard, no-one knew which projects, how much, where it was being done and how.*
>
> *…*
>
> *When we did our audit, we look at people, process and technology. We find that the processes are improving. We need people to be better skilled to be using those processes. I think we need to work harder at it. I take your point: it has been going on for a while. We need to be better and I think we can do it. We have good processes in place. We need to be able to use them and even report against those projects that are not using the central processes of the QGCIO that they have set up. That overall governance body needs to get a report on the exceptions for that so that they can improve that and hold departments accountable to make sure that they are using the process.[40]*

With regard to the timeliness of updating of the dashboard, the committee identified a number of projects where updates had not been done for some time. In response to this issue, the department advised:

> *The Guideline suggests that no data on the Digital Projects Dashboard be older than eight weeks. This guidance has been in place since late 2014. QGCIO regularly liaises with agencies on the publishing requirements including regular correspondence to all departments. Agencies are responsible for the currency of published data.[41]*

The publishing guidelines state:

> *Data currency should be held to an eight-week maximum, with agencies publishing every four to six weeks. The publishing cycle is based on the "Date data current at" field for each project, with no data on the Digital Projects Dashboard older than eight weeks. Therefore, the full cycle of agency data collection, approval and publishing must also be constrained to an eight-week maximum.*
>
> *Over and above this eight week maximum, as required, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (in its own right) may also direct agencies to update their dashboard data currency within a specified time frame.[42]*

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[39]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[40]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 6.

[41]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 1.

[42]   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019, p 15.

However, it should be noted that the guidelines include specific guidance for publishing for special events including 'Estimate Committee Hearings' and during MOG changes. With regard to Estimates hearings, the guidelines state:

Every effort should be made to refresh your published project information prior to the commencement of Estimates.

However, as of COB on the Friday prior to the commencement of Estimates, there is a freeze on publishing updated datasets to ensure the consistency of briefing notes provided to the Minister and to the Premier.

The freeze will apply until COB of the last day of Estimates.[43]

With regard to MOG changes, the guidelines specify that projects transferred to other departments during MOG changes should not be closed and comments inserted to reflect the changed circumstances.[44]

3.3.2   QGCIO ICT dashboard guidelines

As noted above, the QGCIO prepares non-mandatory guidelines to assist departments when they are deciding which projects to report on the ICT dashboard. The guidelines are not prescriptive, but the QGCIO recommends that, at a minimum, departments report projects that meet any of the following criteria:

- have formal governance boards

- have planned expenditure of $100,000 or greater

- are in the delivery stage

- are high-risk or relate to a high-risk ICT system

- have an assurance level of two or greater according to the QGCIO's assurance framework

- do not expose potential security risks.[45]

QAO recommended:

… the QGCIO enhance the ICT dashboard and its publishing guidelines to improve completeness, relevance, accuracy, timeliness and comparability of information.[46]

The Auditor-General's Report concluded:

The ICT dashboard enables transparency about the number and planned cost of major projects across departments. However, there are several weaknesses with the completeness and controls over the accuracy of the content within the dashboard, resulting in reduced user confidence in its reliability.

There is also inconsistency in the information that departments publish about their projects, because it is not mandatory for them to follow the QGCIO's guidelines for the dashboard. These issues detract from the usefulness and reliability of the information for the public.[47]

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[43]   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019, p 7.

[44]   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019, p 7.

[45] AG rpt, p 16.

[46]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[47]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 12.

Overall QAO found:

… the guidelines were very good. They were clear. They were well communicated. Everyone who we talked to who was responsible for updating the dashboard knew and understood what they were supposed to do. That part was really good. I just mentioned the process and people being skilled. It is around program and project management where we need to do better so that we can have the successful delivery of IT projects. Across-the-board within the departments we can improve in this space. It needs improvement.[48]

Departments can create their own guidelines or modify the QGCIO guidelines for their use.[49] However, QAO noted that the audit found that, whilst departments could use their own guidelines, the QGCIO guidelines were not ineffective. QAO advised that:

We found that the departments were following the guidelines because it is really hard for each department to develop their own guidelines. When QGCIO has developed a really nice set of plain and simple guidelines, people are able to use them.[50]

Subsequent to the audit, the dashboard publishing criteria were reviewed and updated.[51]

The QGCIO confirmed that QAO's recommendation regarding the meanings of ICT, digital or digitally-enabled projects has been completed with the new definitions uploaded to the Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture (QGEA) framework glossary in August 2018.[52]

The QGCIO advised:

The 2018 update increased guidance to agencies in a number of areas, including: updated data publishing criteria to recommend that projects in the initiate stage be published; clearer explanations around changes in projects in the delivery stage; information on outcomes and outputs achieved to date; and more information about key decisions and corrective actions for projects that changed significantly. Based on the QAO findings, my office will continue to work with the departments on delivering a common approach based on the general criteria by regularly updating the publishing guideline, to continually improve the level of advice and guidance.[53]

DHPW confirmed that the implementation of this recommendation has been completed advising that the new criteria were approved via the QGEA ICT Profiling Standard on 9 April 2019 and the publishing guideline was updated on 11 April 2019.[54] A further updated version of the publishing guideline was issued in July 2019.[55]

3.3.2.1 *Departmental guidelines different to QGCIO guidelines*

QAO found that whilst each department has detailed processes for collating, reviewing and approving project data for publishing, some departments' processes were not robust enough to capture all major projects for reporting to the dashboard.[56]

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[48]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 6.

[49]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, pp 2-3.

[50]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 4.

[51]   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.0, April 2019, pp 8-9.

[52]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

[53]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 8.

[54]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 4.

[55]   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.1, July 2019.

[56]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 27.

The Auditor-General's Report identifies the following examples:

- DE – reports projects that are transformational and does not report those project that are replacing existing systems. It should be noted that DE reviewed, updated and aligned its criteria more closely to the QGCIO guidelines in October 2017.

- QH – reports projects greater than $1 million. QH considers this threshold to be appropriate for them considering the size of their portfolio of projects.

- DJAG – reports projects greater than $500,000.

- DHPW – reports projects with an assurance level[57] equal or greater than three.[58]

QAO recommended that all departments:

- *implement efficient and automated processes for collecting, collating, approving and publishing dashboard data.*

- *Publish data to the dashboard that is consistent with the QGCIO publishing criteria and guidelines and provide sufficient detail in the explanatory notes when changes are made to projects' scope, time or budget.[59]*

QAO recommended that the QGCIO enhances the ICT dashboard and updates the publishing guidelines by:

- *working with departments to publish one set of agreed criteria and supporting guidelines to be used by all departments*

- *considering an increase in the estimated cost criteria of projects to be reported[60]*

QAO confirmed that the guidelines are not mandated and therefore do not require all agencies to conform to them.[61]

QAO examined the reasons departments' publishing guidelines were different to those of the QGCIO. Reasons included that some departments considered that the $100,000 criteria for publishing projects on the dashboard to be too low in the current economic environment, with these departments establishing their own, much higher reporting thresholds.[62]

The committee sought information from the QGCIO regarding the reasons for the differing guidelines, and QAO advised that there is complexity due to trying to achieve a workable solution for agencies of differing sizes. QAO noted:

It would be better to have firmer, more consistent guidelines so you know what you are looking at, but at least take into account the complexities of the different sizes of the departments.[63]

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[57]   Assurance levels are defined in Table 1 below.

[58]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 26.

[59]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 14.

[60]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[61]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 3.

[62]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 7.

[63]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 3.

In response to the recommendation to work with departments to publish one set of agreed criteria and supporting guidelines to be used by all departments, the QGCIO stated:

A single set of criteria will be maintained within the ICT Dashboard Publishing Guideline, which is a detailed document to assist departments in publishing to the ICT Dashboard.

QGCIO will continue to work with departments on delivering a common approach based on the general criteria.[64]

In May 2019, DHPW provided an update on the progress made on implementing this recommendation advising:

QGCIO consulted widely with departments during December 2018 through to March 2019, to develop a new simplified set of publishing criteria, to be uniformly applied by all departments.

Initial informal consultation was conducted across the sector during December 2018 – January 2019, feedback from which helped further refine the draft criteria. This was followed by QGEA-based (i.e. QGEA) formal sector-wide consultation, during February – March 2019.

These new criteria were officially approved on 9 April 2019 and embedded in the Queensland Government ICT Profiling Standard.[65]

The updated publishing guidelines state:

The QAO Report 1:2018-2019 "Managing & monitoring ICT Projects" made several recommendations regarding enhancing the Digital Projects Dashboard and the publishing guidelines. In relation to recommendations 1.1 and 1.2, one set of agreed publishing and cost criteria has been defined. These revised publishing criteria have been through both informal and formal QGEA consultation with agencies and approved for publishing.[66]

Table 1 below details the revised publishing limit, but also notes that departments have the option to publish under these dollar limits.[67]

Table 1: Revised minimum publishing criteria for publishing on the Digital Projects Dashboard

Assurance level	Any project or Program	Approved expenditure >= $500,000	Approved expenditure >= $1,000,000
Level 4	Yes		
Level 3	Yes		
Level 2		Yes	
Level 1			Yes

Source: Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v3.0.0, April 2019, p 14.

The Digital Projects Dashboard publishing criteria are defined in detail in the Queensland Government ICT Profiling Standard with the definitions of the various assurance levels further defined in the ICT program and project assurance framework.[68]

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[64] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 62.

[65] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 3.

[66] Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4, April 2019, p 4.

[67] Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4, April 2019, p 14.

[68] Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture, ICT profiling standard 2019, May 2019, p 43.

The assurance profiling process analyses nine criteria to calculate an initiative's assurance level with each progressive assurance level supporting an increasing level of assurance activity, scrutiny and independence.[69]

With regard to advice provided by QGCIO staff, the QGCIO advised:

… we provide guidance and advice to all projects that are rated on their business impact. There are four levels. Level 1s we do not because they are buying equipment and things like that. 2s we monitor, we do not really get heavily involved. The 3s and 4s, which are the high and critical projects, we are involved in every one of those. We do what is called an investment review which the report talks about, what is called a gate zero, early on in the project. They come to us and work their way through. If the project is going to CBRC for money, if it is big enough for Business Queensland to do their business cases they will do it and we will support them looking at all their project documentation et cetera, or if they are lower than that we will also look at the business case. All those get reviewed. Every project that is a 3 and 4 has advice and guidance from my teams throughout the project at set points that are set through the policy.[70]

DCDSS supported the change in reporting thresholds advising:

Providing an expenditure threshold for Level 1 (>$1 million) and 2 (>=$500,000) in the publishing guideline has provided a pragmatic approach to reporting initiatives to the dashboard.[71]

3.3.2.2 Identifying project changes over time

QAO recommended that ICT dashboard and publishing guidelines include:

… the ability to explain changes in projects in the delivery stage and provide information on outcomes and outputs achieved to date[72]

And require departments to include:

… more information about key decisions and corrective actions for projects that change significantly (re-set or re-baseline)[73]

QAO advised that, whilst the information published by departments was accurate, they found that for projects that had been on the dashboard for a long period of time project changes were not sufficiently reported. QAO also advised that when projects changed the previous information was overwritten with the updated information so the history of the project was not reported.[74]

QAO advised:

It is that point in time which does not then necessarily tell you the journey that the project has been on. That might be additional information in terms of how well it is tracking, so baselining the original budget and having that as something that does not just get overwritten, even if it is approved for a new budget, would be a helpful data point so you can say, 'Originally we thought this would only be a $2 million project. It is now a $12 million project.' What has changed?[75]

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[69]   Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture, Program and project assurance framework, November 2018, pp 5-6.

[70]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, pp 15-16.

[71]   Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2.

[72]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[73]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[74]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 3.

[75]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 3.

The Auditor-General's Report notes:

> *QGCIO's publishing guidelines issued in September 2017 state that the explanatory notes field is crucial and should be used for all projects, regardless of status, to give a brief rolling history. The guidelines also provide the example that if a project is reported as 'red' and subsequently reported as 'green' because the project is back on track, the explanatory notes should continue the story, describing the circumstances that led to how the project is now reported.[76]*

The audit identified 60 of 161 projects published on the dashboard to not have sufficient explanatory notes about the key decisions and major changes to projects over their lifecycle.[77]

At the committee's public hearing, the QGCIO acknowledged that nearly every project goes through change including to scope and direction. The QGCIO advised:

> *I do not think there is a project on the dashboard, if you go and have a look at it, that has not gone through change.*
>
> *…*
>
> *In fact, actually, I would be worried if they had not. Every project needs to be managed properly. It is not like building a building. You pretty well know what you are going to get when you build a building. When you are doing an IT project it is like trying to build an aircraft flying in the air because everything is changing as you are moving along. I would be more concerned seeing a project on the dashboard that did not have ticks in most of those boxes— that we did not have quite enough money, yes, we have delayed it a bit because of these issues or we have changed scope. Some of the projects that look like they are on time and on budget actually have kind of gone, no, we are being too ambitious. A lot of the time my advice is you are being too ambitious. A lot of it is kind of cut your ambition back. Underpromise and overdeliver is actually probably a better way to go. In the past we have overpromised and underdelivered a lot. Again the challenge with long projects is by the time you get to the end everything has changed.[78]*

Subsequent to the audit the ICT dashboard and QGCIO's publishing guideline have been updated to include a 'Project journey and reasons for variance' field. The updated guidelines state:

> *The 'Project journey and reasons for variance' field is crucial and should be used for all projects, regardless of status, to give a brief, rolling history of the project or program journey. It should include the rationale in clear, concise and plain English behind significant changes to time or costs (under or over) when they occur as well as a persistent summary as history in later entries. It should contain a general commentary to reduce reader confusion as well as outlining outcomes and successes achieved to date, and potential extra information about planned outcomes for Queenslanders.*
>
> *Rationale may include business reason behind the delta or status change, as well as mitigation steps planned and/or being taken to address the issue and an anticipated resolution date if available and appropriate.*
>
> *This field should also be updated when a project is published as closed to communicate outcomes and successes to date, and any additional information to fill-out the project/programs journey for the reader.*

[76]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 29.

[77]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 29.

[78]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 16.

*In addition to providing sufficient detail (in the project journey) upon the initial occurrence of changes to status, cost, and/or time, it is **strongly recommended** that even after projects/programs have been officially re-baselined, the project journey should retain a persistent short summary of the rationale behind the significant time and/or cost deltas.[79]*

The guidelines also provide assistance with defining and providing examples of project journey events.[80]

The glossary on the Digital Projects Dashboard website notes for the 'Project journey and reasons for variance' that:

Projects by their nature are to a degree dynamic, requiring flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, ensuring they continue to deliver against the current needs of the business.

'Project journey and reasons for variance' provides summarised notes of:

- *the project's end to end journey, including changes to status, and significant changes to scope, time or cost and the associated rationale for same.*

- *project background and additional information on the project status.*

- *high level steps taken to address a 'Closely monitored' or 'Action required' status and also the anticipated resolution date.*

Other information may include project successes to date, key outcomes achieved and advice of project closure.[81]

The QGCIO advised that the latest release of the dashboard, which went live in September 2018, included:

…additional capabilities focused on helping agencies clearly and simply enunciate the highlights of each project's journey, including: the alignment of each project to one of the government's four primary digital priorities, being people, collaboration, connectivity and trust; a renewed emphasis on enabling agencies to communicate the significant milestones and major changes along the project's journey; and a free text field to allow for a plain English and concise journey of milestones, changes or highlights.[82]

The committee sought further information regarding what additional guidance had been included in the revised guidelines in regard to project journeys. DHPW advised:

Guidelines in the Dashboard Publishing guideline for use by all departments have been updated and published for the 'free text field' called 'Project journey and reasons for variance' following the September 2018 roll out of Release 4 of the Digital Projects Dashboard. Guidance is provided to agencies regarding the following inclusions in this field:

- *Field is crucial and should be used for all projects, regardless of status, to give a brief, rolling history of the project or program journey*

- *Outline of outcomes and successes achieved to date, and potential extra information about planned outcomes for Queenslanders*

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[79] Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v3.0.0, April 2019, pp 8-9.

[80] Queensland Government Chief Information Office, Publishing guideline – Digital Projects Dashboard – Release 4 v 3.0.0, April 2019, p 9.

[81] Queensland Government, 'Digital Projects Dashboard', https://www.qld.gov.au/digitalprojectsdashboard/glossary#g20

[82] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

- *Rationale in clear, concise and plain English behind significant changes to time or costs (under or over) when they occur as well as persistent summary as history in later entries*

- *Rationale may include business reason behind a status change, as well as mitigation steps planned and/or being taken to address the issue and an anticipated resolution date if available and appropriate*

- *Even after projects/programs have been officially re-baselined, the project journey should retain a persistent short summary of the rationale behind the significant time and/or cost deltas*

- *Field should also be updated when a project is published as closed to communicate outcomes and successes to date, and any additional information to fill out the project/programs journey to the reader.[83]*

The committee also sought information regarding the training and advice provided to departments in order to ensure the consistency and useability of the 'Project journey and reasons for variance' facility on the dashboard. The department advised:

Since late 2014, training and advice are provided across the sector in several ways:

- *Targeted advice – when issues are identified, QGCIO will seek to meet with the individual agency*

- *Regular catch-ups with each agency as part of business-as-usual operations*

- *All agency broadcasts as required*

- *Briefings to CIO Committee*

- *Dashboard forums held with representatives of all departments to raise awareness of various aspects of the dashboard*

- *Fortnightly email to all departments, highlighting publishing currency. Within this email, a 'Helpful hint' section reminds departments of key publishing aspects.*

At all engagements, messaging would typically include the following:

- *the importance of plain English, clear and concise project journey information, in line with published guidance*

- *critical need to include a summarised and persistent story about each project's journey specifically the need to contain general commentary to reduce reader confusion, including outcomes and successes achieved and extra information about planned outcomes.[84]*

DHPW also advised:

Improving the quality of data on the dashboard is important. To this end the Queensland Government Chief Information Office regularly updates the publishing guideline, liaises with agencies to bring data quality matters to their attention, and continually enhances self-serve data quality views on the government's ICT Console.[85]

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[83]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, pp 2-3.

[84]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 3.

[85]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 3.

The committee identified examples of projects on the dashboard which did not detail the reasons for status changes in the 'Project journey and reasons for variance' field. The department confirmed the guidelines:

> *… detail the critical need to include a summarised and persistent story about each project's journey, including for " ... significant changes to time or costs (under or over) when they occur as well as a persistent summary as history in later entries ... ".[86]*

DHPW advised:

> *If anomalies are identified, QGCIO officers will contact agencies to discuss and offer advice and assistance. If several agencies are experiencing similar issues, advice will be included in the fortnightly communications.*

> *Anomalies may be identified through a variety of means including: ad-hoc visual scans of refreshed datasets, and automated business rule checking via the ICT Console.[87]*

The QGCIO also advised that, whilst it may take some time to implement, they will be enabling an electronic link to project information which may be held by departments in other places, such as on departmental webpages.[88]

3.3.2.3 Links between projects on the ICT dashboard

QAO recommended expanding features on the dashboard to include links between projects, programs and the DIGITAL 1ST strategy. In response to this recommendation, the QGCIO advised:

> *The Queensland Government Profiling Standard was updated in May 2018, to clarify naming conventions for projects and programs.*

> *In a future release QGCIO will look to make capability enhancements to the dashboard, to allow agencies to:*

> - *Include alignment between each project and DIGITAL 1ST priorities.*

> - *Provide additional optional information about each project and how it supports the government's responsive government agenda.[89]*

DHPW provided an update on the status of implementation of this recommendation in May 2019 advising:

> *… the Digital Projects Dashboard, launched on 7 September 2018, requires agencies to publish a primary digital priority for each project/program. These align to the Queensland Government's four digital priorities, namely: people, collaboration, connectivity, and trust.[90]*

The committee sought additional information on the issue of identification of projects that may be contingent on each other. DHPW advised:

> *Contingent projects can be acknowledged in the opening 'Objectives' field. Agencies are encouraged to relate projects to any parent program if applicable. As per Section 7.3 of the Guideline programs and references to programs should also always use consistent naming.[91]*

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[86]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 2.

[87]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 2.

[88]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 10.

[89]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 64.

[90]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 7.

[91]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 1.

3.3.2.4   *Definition of ICT terms*

QAO recommended that the QGCIO define the meanings of ICT, digital or digitally-enabled projects, and projects with high business impact.[92]

The QGCIO defines 'Digital and ICT-enabled initiatives' to be:

> *ICT-enabled initiatives focus on delivering improvements to the existing way of doing business, using ICT as a key element. Any initiative requiring ICT/technologies to effect change and realise outputs, outcomes and/or benefits is considered ICT-enabled.*[93]

QAO advised that the audit identified ICT projects within departments that were not reported on the dashboard:

> *In our opinion, they were ICT projects but there is a debate about some of those. One of the reasons the department had not put them on was that they did not classify them as an ICT project. There was a looseness in the definition of what an ICT project is. That is what some of them were.*[94]

QAO advised:

> *… we believe that more projects could go on the dashboard. In terms of the number of projects which departments decide are not ICT enabled or digitally enabled, these are some of the additional things that departments can do to have a more complete list of projects on the dashboard.*[95]

QAO advised that the definition contained in the guidelines was not clear.[96] QAO recommended that the whole-of-government assurance frameworks that complement departmental processes for monitoring ICT projects could be strengthened by defining the meanings of ICT, digital or digitally-enabled projects, and projects with high business impact.[97]

The QGCIO confirmed that:

> *Recommendation 2.1, defining the meanings of ICT, digital or digitally-enabled projects is now complete with the new definitions uploaded to the Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture framework glossary in August 2018.*[98]

DHPW confirmed:

> *Formal definitions for the meanings of ICT, digital or digitally-enabled projects, and projects with high business impact have been added to the Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture (QGEA) glossary and are available on the QGCIO website. In the recent review of the ICT Planning Methodology these terms were also incorporated.*[99]

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[92]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[93]   Queensland Government Chief Information Office, 'QGCIO glossary', https://www.qgcio.qld.gov.au/publications/qgcio-glossary/digital-and-ict-enabled-initiatives-definition

[94]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, pp 3-4.

[95]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 3.

[96]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 4.

[97]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[98]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

[99]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2.

3.3.2.5 *Project stages*

The QGCIO has standardised definitions of the key project stages. Refer section 3.2 of this report.

During the audit, QAO found that the QGCIO's publishing guidelines specifically exclude projects in the 'initiate' stage. QAO identified at least 24 projects, with a total planned expenditure of $109 million, that departments considered to be in the initiate stage, which under the arrangements at the time of the audit, did not have to be and therefore were not published on the dashboard.[100]

QAO recommended that the QGCIO enhances the ICT dashboard to include projects funded to initiate and/or to develop a business case, with timelines and budgets for the initiate stage.[101]

The QGCIO's response included in the Auditor-General's Report states that the publishing guideline was updated in May 2018 to include projects in the initiate stage.[102]

At the committee's public hearing, the QGCIO advised that they were working on the design work for release 5 which will enable the reporting of projects in the initiate stage as recommended by the Auditor-General.[103] DHPW provided a further update on this issue in May 2019 advising:

> *QGCIO is considering options for upgrades in the next Release (R5) of the Dashboard. One such option being considered is the reporting of projects earlier in the pipeline to capture and display information on Proposed Projects and capture more projects in the initiate stage.[104]*

DE advised the committee that the department is not supportive of the addition of projects to the dashboard that are at idea definition or early business case stage of development due to many of these projects not progressing to full project initiation.[105]

3.3.2.6 *Approved end dates*

The dashboard identifies approved end dates which is the scheduled end date that was identified and approved at the start of the project or has been revised and approved through the department's governance processes.[106]

The department confirmed that this definition would typically include go-live, support immediately post go-live to resolve urgent issues, handover to a business-as-usual support team and other standard project closure activities.[107]

During its review of the dashboard, the committee noted a number of projects with approved end dates which had passed and the status remained 'On track'. The committee sought additional information from the department on the reasons this may occur. DHPW advised:

> *While each department is responsible for publishing its data, their internal governance and approval processes vary and may include:*
>
> - *several stakeholders such as: Senior Responsible Owner; Chief Information Officer, Project Governance Board; Director-General; or Minister.*

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[100] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 7.

[101] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[102] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 62.

[103] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 10.

[104] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 3.

[105] Department of Education, correspondence dated 15 May 2019, p 2.

[106] Queensland Government, 'Digital Projects Dashboard',
https://www.qld.gov.au/digitalprojectsdashboard/glossary#g17

[107] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 3.

- *waiting to collate all project board updates across multiple board meeting timeframes to refresh all projects at once which may cause delays and affect the currency of published data.*

These processes tend to have a substantial impact on the timeliness of data and the frequency of updates.[108]

DHPW advised that, as part of continual improvement activities, the QGCIO is implementing additional checks on project data, including 'Approved end date' in the past. DHPW advised:

QGCIO liaises with agencies on an ongoing basis to improve data quality. Via the ICT Console departments have secure self-serve access to a set of online visualisations that show: the history of dashboard refreshes for every project; and automated suggestions where likely data quality errors should be checked.[109]

3.3.2.7 Other QAO recommendations and action

QAO advised the committee that, during the audit, they found the QGCIO team to be very responsive, including actioning recommendations as the audit progressed.[110]

The QGCIO advised:

The QAO report No. 1 for 2018-19 recommendations 1 and 2 were assigned to my office. Recommendation 1 is largely complete, with only two of the seven sub-recommendations remaining to be finalised. Those two elements relate to criteria for use by agencies in identifying projects to publish on the Digital Projects Dashboard.[111]

3.3.3 Recommended updates to the ICT dashboard

QAO recommended that the QGCIO enhance the ICT dashboard and its publishing guidelines to improve completeness, relevance, accuracy, timeliness and comparability of information.[112]

The QGCIO advised that the latest release of the dashboard went live on 7 September 2018. The QGCIO advised:

Central to this release was aligning the dashboard to the reality of digital government. We wanted to increase public transparency around the digital projects that are underway across government.

As well as a pivot towards the digital agenda, the renamed Digital Projects Dashboard rolls out additional capabilities focused on helping agencies clearly and simply enunciate the highlights of each project's journey, including: the alignment of each project to one of the government's four primary digital priorities, being people, collaboration, connectivity and trust; a renewed emphasis on enabling agencies to communicate the significant milestones and major changes along the project's journey; and a free text field to allow for a plain English and concise journey of milestones, changes or highlights.[113]

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[108]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 2.

[109]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 2.

[110]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[111]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 8.

[112]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[113]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

With regard to modifications to the dashboard, the QGCIO confirmed that the dashboard is continually updated. The QGCIO confirmed the latest release, Release 4, aligns to the future digital approach which will broaden the projects that are reported. The QGCIO also confirmed that the modifications provide simple ways of indicating the history of project changes.[114]

QAO recommended that the QGCIO update the dashboard to include automated controls to validate data when it is entered. In response QGCIO agreed in principle with the recommendation stating:

Whilst QGCIO agree that automated controls to validate published data are important, current capabilities are limited by the underlying Open Data platform. Remediating this issue will have resource impacts which will need to be managed.

QGCIO will also continue to leverage and enhance existing data quality tools such as the data validation tool (for agencies' use), where it can be adjusted to align to new releases' data elements.

QGCIO also publishes a series of online visualisations, available to agencies, that amongst other uses, can help agencies improve data quality.[115]

In response to questions about this issue, the QGCIO advised:

To actually implement would cost quite a considerable amount of money by upgrading the platform and I do not have the money at the moment, so we are implementing workarounds and assistance for them to validate their data. Until we go through a platform upgrade, I doubt I will be getting investment money to undertake that task.[116]

3.3.4   Are whole-of-government assurance processes effective?

In addition to recommending that the QGCIO define the terms discussed in section 3.3.2.4 of this report, QAO also recommended that the QGCIO:

strengthens whole-of-government assurance frameworks that currently complement departmental processes for monitoring ICT projects by:

- *reporting projects that are defined as high business impact and have not undergone the investment review process*

- *analysing and reporting ICT project performance information to assess the effectiveness of the investment review and project assurance processes*

- *encouraging departments to schedule sufficient project health checks in addition to gate reviews in the assurance plans for all high business impact projects, and following up on these if they don't occur on time*

- *assisting departments in identifying root causes for project failures and successes, collating these, publishing information for learning, and encouraging departments to look for early warning signs so they can mitigate these risks[117]*

QAO also recommended that all departments:

consider the need for projects with high business impact to undergo periodic health checks in addition to gate reviews and that the focus of these health checks includes the financial management[118]

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[114]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, pp 9-10.

[115]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 63

[116]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

[117]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 13.

[118]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 14.

QAO concluded:

The monitoring of major ICT programs through the assurance process at the whole-of-government level is not being carried out as well as it could be. The whole-of-government and departmental governing bodies are not using the information they have available through the new processes to increase the success rate of ICT programs and projects. Valuable information obtained through the QGCIO's gate reviews is not being effectively used to minimise the repetition of mistakes.[119]

QAO also concluded:

At the departmental level, there are still significant challenges to improve the successful delivery of major ICT projects. Both the HRIS program and the MyDAS series of projects demonstrate that keeping programs and projects running while significant policy, structural and legislative changes occur contributes to slow progress and high delivery costs. Timely project decision-making needs to occur when changing projects to reduce the inefficient use of public funding that is occurring.[120]

Whilst acknowledging that changes in the investment review process were imminent, QAO identified the following gaps in the investment reviews:

- the definition of 'high business impact' projects was unclear

- the criteria for selecting projects for the ICT Director-General Council investment review was unclear

- the ICT Director-General Council was not necessarily aware of all ICT projects[121]

QAO considered that without a clear definition, departments may not select all relevant projects for investment review. QAO also considered that, in order to be as effective as possible, the ICT Director-General Council should be aware of all Queensland Government ICT projects and review those that have a high business impact.[122]

In response to the issue of reporting projects that are defined as high business impact and having undergone the investment review process, the QGCIO advised:

Existing processes have been tightened and the mechanism to note and escalate non-compliant or missed projects has been initiated. In addition to this requirement, options to extend the data sources available to my office for analysis are currently being considered. We have developed a knowledge base that correlates data from several sources to inform a more connected and holistic picture of initiatives, either planned or in-flight, across the sector. This increases the level of visibility and detail about initiatives and allows us to identify gaps and discrepancies and, ultimately, assists the provision of better advice to agencies about investment decisions.[123]

DHPW advised:

The QGCIO regularly reports to the DDG DISC on programs and projects that have been registered with the QGCIO but are too far progressed for review.

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[119] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 12.

[120] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 12.

[121] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 38.

[122] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, pp 38-39.

[123] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

The QGCIO is in the process of developing the first Digital and ICT update report to the CEO leadership board which will include all known projects that were not reviewed by QGCIO.[124]

With regard to the other recommendations addressed to the QGCIO, at the time of the committee's public hearing, the QGCIO advised that these recommendations were on target to meet the planned 2019 implementation dates.[125]

With regard to the inclusion of departmental assurance plans in the assurance information provided to the ICT Director-General Council, DHPW confirmed:

QGCIO recommends that agencies undertake assurance planning, which QGCIO will assess as part of the Investment Review report supplied to the Deputy Director-General Digital & ICT Steering Committee (DDG DISC).[126]

QAO noted:

Each department is accountable for making investment decisions and delivering on their investments. The Queensland Government Chief Information Office has also developed standards and established investment review processes at the whole-of-government level. These processes supplement departmental governance in monitoring and managing ICT programs and projects. In this audit we looked at whether monitoring projects at departmental and whole-of-government levels have improved the successful delivery of ICT programs and projects.[127]

QAO recommended that all departments:

- *use learnings (including the QGCIO's summary of systemic issues) from project health checks and gate reviews in monitoring and managing programs and projects*[128]

In regard to governance processes QAO advised:

Monitoring of major ICT programs through assurance process at the whole-off-government level can also be improved. Whole-of-government and departmental governing bodies are not using the information that is already available through these new processes to increase the success rate of ICT programs and projects. Valuable information obtained through QGCIO's gate reviews is also not being effectively used to minimise repeating the mistakes of the past.[129]

The QGCIO advised:

Queensland government agencies have embraced the best practice embedded in the Axelos suite of project management tools and the supporting gated assurance processes endorsed by Queensland Treasury. Core to those practices is that success is built on sound governance, independent evidence-based assessment of initiatives, and transparency. Agencies have been assisted to develop this sound governance through tools that are embedded into the Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture framework. The Queensland government assurance and investment review processes have also enhanced agency capability to better support independent evidence-based review.[130]

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[124] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2.

[125] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

[126] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2.

[127] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 1.

[128] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 14.

[129] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[130] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 8.

With regard to sharing lessons learnt across all departments, the QGCIO advised:

The auditor has made a comment that we are not doing that as well as we should. We do do it. In fact, there is a public document we have taken from the very big projects, which you would all know very well, to pick out the lessons from those and we share that with agencies. What we have not done as well as possible is actually picking up each project as you work your way through. It informs my team. As they look at new projects they have the knowledge from the previous project. There are only three people who do this in my team. They use that as they go, but we do not document probably well enough for agencies. A lot of that advice does go out and it helps us build our knowledge as we work our way through. It is around working our way through.

We also are now strongly supporting a project management community of practice across government which is about skilling and about sharing those lessons and being really practical. It is better the people who have got the scars and had the problems to talk to each other rather than me trying to do an academic approach to sharing that. A lot of our sharing is just getting people together and letting them work together and understanding where they are going and giving them a safe place to talk where they are not going to get outed. We actually provide a lot of that. We are doing better than we did five years ago, but we can do better as we go forward.[131]

The committee sought additional information from DHPW regarding what information is available to project teams that enable them to learn about issues that occurred in the past, how they eventuated and what controls can be put in place to mitigate against them. In response, DHPW advised:

To provide meaningful information to project teams regarding lessons learnt, the QGCIO has developed a data visualisation of gated (gateway) assurance recommendations.

This view provides access to targeted, licensed stakeholders within Queensland Government of de-identified recommendations that can be refined for their specific area of interest across domains for business, applications and technology, type of initiative, decision point, 3PM3 perspectives (e.g. benefits) and 3P themes. The QGCIO will further refine and develop lessons learned as agreed in the responses to the QAO recommendations.[132]

The committee sought information from departments regarding how they would implement this recommendation. The committee received a range of responses as to how this issue would be managed.

A number of departments confirmed the use of a central register. QCS advised:

As part of quality assurance processes, the QCS ICT Portfolio Office will ensure that lessons learnt from project health checks and gate reviews are captured in a central register and made available to current and future program and project teams for review and consideration.[133]

DCDSS and DCSYW also utilise a central register advising:

The ICT PMO continues to review and incorporate the learnings published in the QGCIO's summary of systemic issues when undertaking health checks and gate reviews. The ICT PMO continues to record learnings from gate reviews in a consolidated register which is then used to identify opportunities for improvement and trends.[134]

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[131] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 17.

[132] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2.

[133] Queensland Corrective Services, correspondence dated 23 May 2019, p 2.

[134] Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2 and Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, correspondence dated 3 June 2019, p 1.

DE advised that lessons learned are included in the Community of Practice ICT Project Manager meetings.[135] Both DITID and DES noted:

QGC10's summary of systemic issues has been superseded by the QGC10's gated assurance recommendations and when complete, this will be tabled at the ISC. In addition, new project managers are inducted where lessons learned from relevant projects are discussed.[136]

DLGRMA advised:

DLGRMA will research and use learnings from other projects and engage vendors and contractors with successful ICT project implementation experience. Identifying issues early and acting upon them will minimise problems from becoming systemic.[137]

QH advised:

eHealth Queensland has completed a lessons learnt report based on the outcomes observed from the gated reviews and health checks across 2017/18. Based on this report, eHealth Queensland have identified opportunities for improving program and project direction, management and delivery practices.[138]

DJAG advised:

DJAG promotes the use of learnings from gated reviews and project health checks to project managers, project boards and senior responsible officers. Since DJAG's response to the audit finding was provided, nearly 100 business and IT staff have completed an internally run project management course that has emphasised the importance of gated reviews and documenting lessons learned through the life of a project. DJAG has invested in a knowledge base repository to house project lessons and is in the process of rolling this out to project staff.[139]

DATSIP advised:

DATSIP has a strong working relationship with the QGCIO underpinned by having a senior staff from the QGCIO as a permanent ICT Steering Committee member. Through this governance relationship, the management of all future significant ICT projects will benefit from the guidance and expertise and learnings provided by QGCIO.[140]

DHPW advised that it is developing a guide for ICT project managers that will incorporate advice on learnings, including the QGCIO's summary of systemic issues, from project health checks and gate reviews.[141]

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[135]   Department of Education, correspondence dated 15 May 2019, p 1.

[136]   Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games, correspondence dated 28 May 2019, p 1 and Department of Environment and Science, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 1.

[137]   Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs, correspondence dated 28 May 2019, p 1.

[138]   Queensland Health, correspondence dated 27 May 2019, p 3.

[139]   Department of Justice and Attorney-General, correspondence dated 4 June 2019, p 2.

[140]   Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, correspondence dated 20 May 2019, p 2.

[141]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 8.

3.3.5 How well are departments monitoring and managing ICT programs and projects?

QAO advised:

Each department is accountable for making investment decisions and delivering on their investments. The Queensland Government Chief Information Office has also developed standards and established investment review processes at the whole-of-government level. These processes supplement departmental governance in monitoring and managing ICT programs and projects. In this audit we looked at whether monitoring projects at departmental and whole-of-government levels have improved the successful delivery of ICT programs and projects.[142]

QAO found that whole-of-government and departmental governing bodies were not using the information that was available through the ICT dashboard and assurance processes to increase the success rate of ICT programs and projects by minimising repeating past mistakes.[143]

QAO advised:

At the departmental level there are still significant challenges to improve the successful delivery of major ICT projects. Both the programs and projects we audited demonstrate that keeping programs and projects running while significant policy, structural and legislative changes occur contributes to slow progress and high delivery costs. Both the programs and projects that we audited had appropriate governance structures for their size and nature. One of them was a multi-agency program and there were people from different agencies, including central agencies, on their governance boards, but these governance bodies were not effective in making timely decisions to maintain high productivity throughout the duration of the program and projects. Timely decision-making needs to occur on projects where there is significant policy and structural change to reduce the inefficient use of public funding that is occurring.[144]

QGCIO advised:

In March 2011, the portfolio, program and project management policy was first published by the Queensland government, for the first time requiring agencies to ensure effective and consistent portfolio, program and project management. This was enhanced with the commencement of the Queensland government investment review process in 2013 and the release of the ICT program and project assurance policy in February 2014. These guides require departments to apply structured, effective and consistent program and project assurance.

The QGCIO has reviewed and continues to provide support and consultancy across the sector in project management best practice and governance. The importance of this function cannot be understated, as it is ICT that underpins government operations and supports the transformation of service delivery. The QAO findings represent an additional step forward in transparency, governance maturity and enhancing the successful delivery of complex digital initiatives.[145]

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[142] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 1.

[143] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[144] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 2.

[145] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 9.

With regard to the use of consultants external to the public sector, the QGCIO advised:

The management and delivery of large projects is a very complex capability … and a lot of the time the skills that are needed for those do not necessarily reside within the public sector so yes, agencies do seek external support in doing those. To give you one example, we talk about independent reviews. We require agencies for high, complex projects to bring in external experts to do independent reviews on a regular basis to support the management of that project and to attempt to work through the issues and make sure that they are aware if they are going off track. At times we require them to go outside and not just do everything within the project team. Independent reviews and external reviews are important parts of any government's process on any major ICT enabled project.[146]

DHPW advised that the government does not outsource ICT but procures professional services and has vendor arrangements in place to procure hardware and software.[147] The QGCIO confirmed that where the skills are available within government then work should be done in-house. However, where it does not have the skills, it should either employ those or purchase the software from elsewhere.

However, the QGCIO acknowledged that:

Getting highly skilled program people is actually really complex and difficult. There are not that many of them.[148]

With regard to funding of ICT projects, the QGCIO advised that government has changed the way large projects are delivered due to adverse issues having arisen in past projects. The QGCIO advised:

Very seldom do we now provide a big project budget at the beginning. This is one of the reasons why, when I hear the words 'cost blowout', I get quite worried. We are heading towards funding projects on an incremental approach so we do not get into the situation where they have spent a lot of money before they come back and discuss how they have gone forward and what they have achieved.[149]

In response to queries regarding the impact of how this change is managed, the QGCIO provided the following example:

We are not talking about just single-year budgets. They tend to be what we call funding packages, so they can be over several years. As agencies take their business case up, the total estimated cost is in that budget but they do not get necessarily the money. In the past you would have gone up with a $500 million project, Treasury would have allocated that agency $500 million, and then they would have just managed that internally. … Now Treasury will provide $30 million or $50 million, whatever is needed for that first step to get themselves ready, and then they need to come back and go through some fairly heavy review processes from ourselves, DPC and Treasury through to CBRC to get the next lot of money. It is one of the controls that has been put in place to avoid the previous problems of large projects that have gone off their own path and not been reviewed regularly.[150]

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[146]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 11.

[147]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 11.

[148]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 16.

[149]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 11.

[150]   Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 12.

The QGCIO explained that the change in approach has been gradual over a number of years. The QGCIO explained:

The systems are now getting to the stage where we can do it. In the past ICT was not in that space. You had to commit to a big approach. There are still some large areas you have to work on. It is not ever going to be fully one way or the other, but we attempt to work our way through. You will hear the terminology 'minimal viable product' coming up much more now than in the past. You go and achieve what you need to do your job and then you enhance it as you go. You do not try and build the full capability at the beginning. The way that the new digital platforms et cetera are going enable us to take that approach. If you went back five years, you had to go and buy a big platform and implement it and do what we used to call a big bang approach. We are trying to do a very much more incremental approach, deliver early value and work our way through that side.[151]

In terms of explaining the annual allocation of funding rather than the whole project funding on the dashboard, DHPW explained:

Agencies are able to leverage the 'Project journey & reasons for variance' field to provide broader context about the holistic project.

With the move away from all-in-one budget approvals for projects, agencies are being encouraged to seek Treasury approval via a series of tranches, with budget approval for the next tranche subject to successful delivery of the previous one. Expenditure and schedule data for these tranche elements tend to reflect the tranche itself.[152]

3.3.5.1 *Case Study – HRIS program*

The HRIS program implementation project was managed by a number of different agencies over its life including PSBA (from 2012 to December 2016), former DSITI (from December 2016 to January 2018) and DHPW (from January 2018).[153] QAO noted that policy changes and organisational restructures affected the approach for delivery of HRIS.[154]

The audit assessed whether the agencies:

- had effective governance processes and made timely decisions in running the program

- used an appropriate methodology to deliver the program

- planned and undertook appropriate assurance reviews

- reported the program status on the ICT dashboard.[155]

QAO found that whilst the program had appropriate governance structures and change management processes for the size and nature of the project, they were not effective in making timely decisions to maintain productivity throughout the lifespan of the project.

QAO found that the decision to 'go live' on 1 December 2017 for QFES followed:

- a Gate 4 readiness review

- all assistant commissioners, including rural fire service and state emergency service, signing off the readiness audit, which confirmed that user training was in progress

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[151] Public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 29 October 2019, p 12.

[152] Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 2 September 2019, p 3.

[153] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 43.

[154] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 44.

[155] Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 43.

- the program manager confirming that all key project documents were approved

- user acceptance testing and ICT security testing being completed.[156]

The responsible committee did not obtain sign-offs on whether:

- the system operated with all the organisation's real data, as opposed to test data and test scenario data

- tests of the responsiveness of the system for end-user access under normal and peak use had been successful, taking into account network, and/or other device performance differences. This would indicate how long users from various centres, including regional and rural areas, needed to wait for a transaction to complete.[157]

While the system would work for standard processes and test data, QAO concluded that this increased the risk that it may not be fit for purpose for the organisation's processes and its full data set. QAO considers that future contract negotiations and implementation planning should include these considerations and additional milestones to test the system, using all the organisation's data during both normal and peak system usage times should be included.[158]

HRIS uses the QGCIO endorsed PRINCE2 methodology to monitor and manage milestones and deliverables including planning, reporting, implanting appropriate changes and commissioning independent assurance reviews.[159]

The Auditor-General's Report identified that the program business cases were developed after the decisions about its approach were already made by government, and as a result the business cases were not fully informed by costed options analysis as required by the Queensland Treasury Project Assessment Framework. QAO noted the business cases lacked robust analysis of alternative options to inform decisions of the cost and benefits of these decisions and that it is difficult to determine whether the program selected the option that would deliver the best value for money.[160]

QAO also found that the HRIS program did not keep its assurance plans up to date and did not obtain timely approval of plans from those charged with governance. The Auditor-General's Report states:

HRIS is an assurance level four program. It has engaged independent assurance providers, external to government, to undertake reviews at key decision points but it did not develop an assurance plan from the start of the project. The first time that the senior responsible officer for HRIS approved the assurance plan was in September 2017.[161]

With regard to reporting project progress on the ICT dashboard, QAO found that the department published facts, such as original budgets, timelines and revised timelines, as well as reporting the status of the program as amber and red at times with comments in the explanatory notes providing warning signs that the program was experiencing issues. However, the program continued for several years before making major changes and before delivering fully functioning ICT outcomes. QAO found that the information on the dashboard didn't appear to have been effectively used to focus action on the program in a timely manner.[162]

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156   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 46.

157   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 46.

158   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 46.

159   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 48.

160   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 48.

161   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 51.

162   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 52.

QAO recommended that DHPW:

- *undertakes a full analysis of the relevant end-to-end payroll and human capital management processes for the remaining entities:*

    ➢ *to assess proposed solutions*

    ➢ *to calculate cost estimates for the services*

- *ensures the program continually assesses that it provides enough information to enable those charged with governance to make timely decisions.*[163]

In its response to the Auditor-General's report, DHPW agreed with both parts of the recommendation with an ongoing timeframe for implementation. DHPW noted that the first part of the recommendation would be addressed as part of the remaining project components for the HRIS Program.[164]

DHPW provided the following additional information in relation to the first part of the recommendation:

As part of implementing payroll or Human Capital Management (HCM) projects, the Program team partners with the agency team to ensure that as-is and to-be business process design is incorporated as part of the solution delivery. The change and embed phase of the project uses high level business processes to understand the change impact for each agency and that informs the appropriate interventions to support the change. The to-be processes are also used to test the solutions thus ensuring the delivery of any change of solution is fit for purpose and enables the agency to transition into the future state with minimal disruption.

The work effort estimates to undertake this analysis is considered by each Principal Project Manager and is incorporated into budgets, schedules, resource profiles and forecasts as part of the end-to-end solution delivery and is thus encompassed in the Program Budget approved by the governance boards and committees.

Business cases being developed for investment approval take into account the end-to-end processes and integration requirements through options analysis, to assist in assessing proposed solutions across payroll, HCM and other related processes, such as Time and Attendance.[165]

In relation to the second part of the recommendation, DHPW advised:

HRIS Program will regularly seek feedback from governance forums on the appropriateness of information provision.[166]

DHPW provided the following information in relation to the status of the implementation of this recommendation:

The HRIS Program has a well-established Governance process to ensure decision makers are well informed and to facilitate decisions in a timely fashion. Each project has at least one and sometimes many reference groups who contribute to design and execution phases.

There are two Program Boards in place, one for Payroll & Integration and one for HCM. The Boards report to the Executive Steering Committee (ESC). Boards regularly discuss improvements to the delivery, amount and type of information presented by the HRIS Program.

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[163]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 70.

[164]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 70.

[165]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 8.

[166]   Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 1: 2018-19 - Monitoring and managing ICT projects*, July 2018, p 70.

The pathway for change requests is well established and each Project reports on Risks and Issues each month, including Program Risks and Issues.

During the delivery, the Boards and ESC are supported by independent assurance gateway reviews, in accordance with the ICT Program and Project Assurance Framework.[167]

3.4   Digital Projects Dashboard functionality

Subsequent to the changes made to the Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines, the committee reviewed the information provided on the dashboard and in the updated guidelines.

The committee surveyed departments seeking comment on the usefulness and usability of the modifications made by the QGCIO to both the renamed Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines. Responses were received from all departments surveyed.

The key responses provided by departments are included below.

3.4.1   Guidelines

QT advised that it supports improvements in the monitoring of major ICT programs across government and will work with the QGCIO to continue to improve the level of advice and guidance.[168]

DPC advised:

The department provided feedback to the Queensland Government Chief Information Office on the review of the Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines. The updated documentation is clear and provides for a more consistent approach to reporting. DPC has a regular process to review and refresh dashboard content. The process for publishing on the Dashboard is considered to be straightforward.[169]

DNRME, DITID, DES and DAF advised:

The QGClO Digital Dashboard Publishing Guideline is reflective of feedback provided by this agency so the agency has been readily able to comply with the updated guidelines.[170]

QCS advised:

… the publishing guidelines provide QCS staff with clear instructions on publishing and data quality requirements, while other resources provide advice, examples and best practice recommendations to support publishing to the dashboard.[171]

QPS advise:

The QPS was consulted by the QGCIO during the development of the revised publishing criteria and guidelines, and the opportunity to provide this feedback was appreciated. The QPS is supportive of the changes to the Digital Projects Dashboard and the revised guidelines, which are considered to improve clarity and enhance the information provided.[172]

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[167]   Department of Housing and Public Works, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 9.

[168]   Queensland Treasury, correspondence dated 3 June 2019, p 3.

[169]   Department of the Premier and Cabinet, correspondence dated 5 June 2019, p 1.

[170]   Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, correspondence dated 14 May 2019, p2, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 13 May 2019, p 2, Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games, correspondence dated 20 May 2019, p 2 and Department of Environment and Science, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 1..

[171]   Queensland Corrective Services, correspondence dated 23 May 2019, p 2.

[172]   Queensland Police Service, correspondence dated 23 May 2019, p 2.

QSBA, which delivers ICT enabled projects to PSBA QPS, QFES, IGEM and QAS, advised:

The usefulness and usability of the modifications made by QGCIO to both the renaming of the Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines provides a clearer understanding of the published information and as reference material for future projects.[173]

DTMR advised:

The revised guideline has provided some clarity in reporting TMR's digital investments. TMR continues to work with the Queensland Government Chief Information Office (QGCIO) to provide further enhancements and clarity to ensure a common understanding across government of the data provided.[174]

DCDSS and DCSYW advised:

The dashboard publishing criteria in the publishing guideline has simplified the rationale for publishing levels 1 to 4 projects.[175]

DE advised:

The modifications made by QGCIO to both the Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines are supported by the department. The revised guidelines have enabled constant process improvement. As an example, the timeliness of the data being published has improved since the audit was undertaken.[176]

DLGRMA advised:

DLGRMA supports the updated guidelines implemented by the QGC10, which have been utilised in the preparation for commencement of our first dashboard report. The instructions are clear and concise with excellent support available from the Digital Projects Dashboard team within the QGC10.[177]

DSDMIP advised:

The department supports the modifications made by the QGCIO to both the renamed Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines. No concerns or issues have been raised regarding usability and the department supports all mechanisms to improve transparency and oversight of ICT enabled and digital projects.[178]

QH advised:

In relation to the usefulness and usability of the modifications to the Digital Projects Dashboard and guidelines, I am aware that representatives from Queensland Health have participated in workshops and provided feedback to the Queensland Government Chief Information Office (QGCIO) on the changes proposed in 'Release 4'. The changes made to the Digital Projects Dashboard, to accommodate for the modified QGCIO guidelines, includes the additional attributes: Primary Digital Priority, Scope Change event, Cost re-evaluation event, and Delivery delay event. These additional attributes provide greater clarity in terms of change events on the

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[173]   Public Safety Business Agency, correspondence dated 24 May 2019, p 1.

[174]   Department of Transport and Main Roads, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 1.

[175]   Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2 and Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, correspondence dated 3 June 2019, p 2.

[176]   Department of Education, correspondence dated 15 May 2019, p 2.

[177]   Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs, correspondence dated 28 May 2019, p 2.

[178]   Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, correspondence dated 30 May 2019, p 2.

performance of initiatives. Internally, Queensland Health has incorporated these requirements into its own digital health initiative reporting standard for internal and external reporting on ICT initiatives.[179]

DATSIP advised:

With respect to your invitation to provide comment on the usefulness and usability of the recently upgraded Digital Project Dashboard and guidelines, as DATSIP does not currently have any significant projects that meet the Dashboard reporting thresholds, we have not yet utilised that system. However, the guidelines appear to provide agencies with clear guidance.[180]

3.4.2   Dashboard

DNRME, DITID, DES and DAF advised:

While the Digital Projects Dashboard is of more use to stakeholders external to the agency, it is useful internally to keep project managers and project boards mindful of the need to report frequently and accurately.[181]

QCs advised:

… I advise that overall the new dashboard appears in line with the Queensland Audit Office's recommendation that agencies be able to explain changes in projects and provide information on outcomes and outputs achieved to date.[182]

DCDSS and DCSYW advised:

DCDSS has noted an improvement in the consistency of reportable items between the dashboard and dataset following Release 4 of the Dashboard. The release consisted of the removal of an unused field from the dataset, as well as the renaming of several dataset headings to align with the names displayed on the Digital Projects Dashboard.[183]

DESBT advised:

A DESBT review of the Digital Projects Dashboard has found the current information useful and clear in detailing agency responsibilities in reporting and updating relevant projects.[184]

DJAG advised:

The internal team responsible for publishing project updates to the Dashboard have found the modifications made by QGCIO appear to be working well and no issues have been experienced.[185]

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[179]   Queensland Health, correspondence dated 27 May 2019, p 1.

[180]   Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, correspondence dated 20 May 2019, p 2.

[181]   Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, correspondence dated 14 May 2019, p 2, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, correspondence dated 13 May 2019, p 2, Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games, correspondence dated 20 May 2019, p 2 and Department of Environment and Science, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 1.

[182]   Queensland Corrective Services, correspondence dated 23 May 2019, p 2.

[183]   Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, p 2 and Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, correspondence dated 3 June 2019, p 2.

[184]   Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, correspondence dated 6 June 2019, p 2.

[185]   Department of Justice and Attorney-General, correspondence dated 4 June 2019, p 2.

DJAG also noted:

> *One of the new features implemented by QGCIO was an ability for members of the public to be able to access background information about a project through the 'learn more' button. The 'learn more' button can contain a hyperlink to an alternate source of information about the project. DJAG was the first agency to utilise this functionality with the* Blue Card Services Recommendation 28.1 Project – Blue Card Home Based Care Register *(Blue Card Register). This early adoption of the functionality was acknowledged by the QGCIO.[186]*

3.4.3   ICT Projects

The committee also sought information from departments regarding ICT projects which may be over time and/or over budget.

Departments who responded that no projects were over time or budget included DNRME, DAF, QCS, PSBA, DITID, DLGRMA, DCDSS, DES, DSDMIP and DESBT.

Departments with no ICT projects being undertaken or where the projects do not meet the publishing threshold included DATSIP and DPC.

QPS advised of two projects where timeframe extensions are being sought.[187] DE advised of one project being closely monitored due to cost re-valuation and delivery date.[188] QH advised of five projects with planned end dates prior to January 2019 and two projects that have an actual cost higher than the latest approved budget.[189]

QT advised of one project which has been subject to delays and the contract with the ICT provider has been terminated.[190]

DCSYW advised of one project with an extended delivery date to 'incorporate learnings from pilot releases; ensure robust implementation activities are undertaken with each rollout phase; and to align to business priorities.'[191]

DTMR advised of nine projects displaying over budget and/or over time variances. However, DTMR noted that the majority of these projects showing over budget are not actually due to cost over runs but rather initial estimates only reflecting costs to complete associated concept phases prior to development of business cases.[192]

DJAG identified one project reporting amber on the Dashboard due to technical complexity impacting availability of the solution. However, both the time and cost changes are within agreed project tolerances.[193]

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[186]   Department of Justice and Attorney-General, correspondence dated 4 June 2019, p 2.

[187]   Queensland Police Service, correspondence dated 23 May 2019, p 2.

[188]   Department of Education, correspondence dated 15 May 2019, p 2.

[189]   Queensland Health, correspondence dated 27 May 2019, pp 1-2.

[190]   Queensland Treasury, correspondence dated 3 June 2019, p 3.

[191]   Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, correspondence dated 3 June 2019, p 2.

[192]   Department of Transport and Main Roads, correspondence dated 29 May 2019, pp 1-2.

[193]   Department of Justice and Attorney-General, correspondence dated 4 June 2019, p 2.

3.5 Committee comments

ICT is fundamental to the way government conducts business and its use has progressively increased as we become more and more reliant on technology as part of our every day lives.

The committee notes that the issue of implementation of ICT projects have historically caused difficulties for governments throughout the world. This is due, in part, to the complexity of government business and the difficulty of purchasing 'off the shelf' programs which require limited modification or adaptation in order for them to be suitable for government use. The rate at which technology is becoming outdated, and therefore having to be replaced and updated sooner, is also a factor.

There is therefore an increasing need for good governance, management and appropriate transparency for these types of projects.

The committee considers the Digital Project Dashboard to be an effective tool in aiding transparency of government ICT projects. The committee notes QAO's comments that the ICT dashboard process is a good process as it enables transparency of the projects and that prior to its introduction no-one knew what projects departments were undertaking, how much they cost, where it was being done and how.

However, the committee considers there are always opportunities to improve governance processes and some of these opportunities were highlighted in the Auditor-General's recommendations.

The committee's review has highlighted the need for the QGCIO to continue to proactively engage with departments to ensure the dashboard is updated regularly and the historical information, including any changes to projects and programs, is clearly articulated to ensure users can readily understand the information contained on the dashboard. The committee is keen that the updating of the dashboard is not seen as merely a compliance exercise but as an opportunity to focus on the key indicators of the status of ICT project implementation.

Of key importance to the committee is the need to ensure the timeliness of information contained on the dashboard. In particular, the committee stresses the importance of ensuring the accuracy of 'status' information, the need to provide appropriate historical information, and updated reasons when projects reach approved end dates.

The committee notes the QGCIO's intention to implement additional checks on project data, including 'Approved end date' in the past. The committee also encourages the QGCIO to progress the enabling of an electronic link to additional project information which is held by departments in other places in order to provide additional material to users.

The Auditor-General's Report also highlighted gaps in the investment review processes. The committee notes the QGCIO's advice regarding the changes that have been made to these processes both during and subsequent to the audit.

QAO found that whole-of-government and departmental governing bodies were not using the information that was available through the ICT dashboard and assurance processes to increase the successful implementation of ICT programs and projects by minimising repeating past mistakes. The committee is of the view that there are many lessons that can be learned from project successes and failures and encourages the QGCIO and all departments to ensure the opportunities to learn from these experiences is not wasted.

The committee also notes the QGCIO's comments regarding the difficulty in retaining highly skilled personnel and encourages the provision of appropriate training and coaching of existing staff to fill this gap.

Overall, the committee is satisfied that appropriate action is being taken to address the recommendations made in the Auditor-General's Report.

Appendix A – Officials at public briefing on 29 October 2019

Queensland Audit Office

- Ms Daniele Bird, Deputy Auditor-General
- Ms Mayus Nath, Director

Department of Housing and Public Works

- Mr Andrew Mills, Queensland Government Chief Information Officer
- Mr Andrew Spina, Deputy Director-General, Digital Technology and Services Division
- Ms Donna Hamer, Executive Director, ICT Strategic Projects, Digital Technology and Services Division

Appendix B – Agency response recommendation implementation timeframes

Agency:	DPC	QT	QGCIO	DHPW	PSBA	QPS	QCS	DSDMIP	DLGRMA	DTMR	DE	QH	DJAG	DNRME	DES/DAF	DITIDCG	DESBT	DCSYW	DCDSS	DATSIP
For QGCIO:																				
1. enhances the ICT dashboard and updates the publishing guidelines by:																				
▪ working with departments to publish one set of agreed criteria and supporting guidelines to be used by all departments	n/a	n/a	Q1-2019	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ considering an increase in the estimated cost criteria of projects to be reported	n/a	n/a	Q1-2019	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ including projects funded to initiate and or to develop a business case, with timelines and budgets for the initiate stage	n/a	n/a	Complete	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ including the ability to explain changes in projects in the delivery stage and provide information on outcomes and outputs achieved to date	n/a	n/a	Q4-2018	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ requiring departments to include more information about key decisions and corrective actions for projects that change significantly (res-set or re-baseline)	n/a	n/a	Q4-2018	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ automating controls to validate data when it is entered	n/a	n/a	On-going	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ expanding features on the dashboard to include links between projects, programs and the DIGITA 1ST strategy.	n/a	n/a	Q4-2018	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2. strengthens whole-of-government assurance frameworks that currently complement departmental processes for monitoring ICT projects by:																				
▪ defining the meanings of ICT, digital, or digitally-enabled projects, and projects with high business impact	n/a	n/a	Q3-2018	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ reporting projects that are defined as high business impact and have not undergone the investment review process	n/a	n/a	Q3-2018	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ analysing and reporting ICT project performance information to assess the effectiveness of the investment review and project assurance processes	n/a	n/a	Q2-2019	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ encourage departments to schedule sufficient project health checks in addition to gate reviews in the assurance plans for all high business impact	n/a	n/a	Q4-2019	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ assisting departments in identifying root causes for project failures and successes, collating these, publishing information from learning, and encouraging departments to look for early warning signs so they can mitigate these risks	n/a	n/a	Q4-2019	Refer QGCIO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
For all departments:																				
3. implement efficient and automated processes for collecting, collating, approving and publishing dashboard data	Q4-2018	On-going	Refer DHPW	Q1-2019	Implemented	Q1-2019	Q1-2019	n/a	Implement with next reportable ICT project	Q4-2018-19	Q4-2018	Q3-2018-19	Q1-2019	Sep-18	Sep-18	n/a	Q2-2019	Q3-2018	Q3-2018	Immediately
4. publish data to the dashboard that is consistent with the QGCIO publishing criteria and guidelines and provide sufficient detail in the explanatory notes when changes are made to projects' scope, time or budget	Q4-2018	On-going	Refer DHPW	On-going	Implemented	Q1-2019	Q3-2018	n/a	Implement with next reportable ICT project	Q2-2018-19	Q4-2018	Completed	Q3-2018	Sep-18	Sep-18	Sep-18	Q2-2019	Immediate	Immediate	Immediately

5. consider the need for projects with high business impact to undergo periodic health checks in addition to gate reviews and that the focus of these health checks includes the financial management	Q4-2018	On-going	Refer DHPW	On-going	Q1-2018-19	Q1-2019	Q1-2019	Q1-2018-19	Implement with next reportable ICT project	Q2-2018-19	Implemented	Q2-2018-19	Q4-2018	Sep-18	Sep-18	Sep-18	Q2-2019	Q1-2019	Q1-2019	Immediately
6. use learnings (including the QGCIO's summary of systemic issues) from project health checks and gate reviews in monitoring and managing programs and projects	Q4-2018	On-going	Refer DHPW	On-going	Implemented	Q1-2019	Q1-2019	Q1-2018-19	Implement with next reportable ICT project	Q2-2018-19	Q4-2018	Q4-2018-19	Q1-2019	Sep-18	Sep-18	Sep-18	Q2-2019	Q1-2019	Q1-2019	Immediately
For Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW):																				
For the HRIS program																				
7. undertakes a full analysis of the relevant and end-to-end payroll and human capital management processes for the remaining entities:																				
▪ to assess proposed solutions	n/a	n/a	Refer DHPW	On-going	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
▪ to calculate cost estimates for the services	n/a	n/a	Refer DHPW	On-going	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
8. ensures the program continually assesses that it provides enough information to enable those charged with governance to make timely decisions	n/a	n/a	Refer DHPW	On-going	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a