

SIRA PROGRAM EVALUATION

WORKERS COMPENSATION DATA SYSTEM MODERNISATION

**STATE INSURANCE REGULATORY
AUTHORITY**

EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WORKERS COMPENSATION DATA SYSTEM MODERNISATION PROGRAM

The State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) is responsible for regulating the Workers Compensation Scheme. In response to findings from internal audits and the Law and Justice Review, which identified issues with the data and analytics capabilities of the agency, SIRA has embarked on a major project to modernise the data systems that support this Scheme. Known as the Workers Compensation Data System Modernisation program, this project is seeking to develop a new platform capable of near real-time capture, integration and visualisation of data from insurers. In the 2018–19 financial year, SIRA undertook foundational year activities to analyse its systems and requirements and develop a design for a new platform. Since November 2019, SIRA has been working with the NSW Data Analytics Centre (DAC) to deliver the end-to-end operations for the project (due to be completed in June 2021).

THE EVALUATION

ARTD was engaged in February 2020 to undertake process evaluations of four of SIRA's programs of activity. The focus of this evaluation was on understanding the activities that have been delivered (in the foundational year and initial build phase) and to inform activities currently underway to develop and implement the new platform. The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, drawing on desktop research, existing administrative documents, and interviews with selected key stakeholders (internal and external).

The methods were implemented largely as intended and there is sufficient evidence to identify lessons for consideration for management and implementation of the ongoing multi-year program and future SIRA projects. However, it was not always clear from program documentation what was scheduled to be delivered during the foundational year, and whether it was. Therefore, there is limited evidence about whether the foundational activities provided the necessary foundation for the multi-year program. It is also too early to tell whether the project has met stakeholder needs.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, stakeholders are generally satisfied with the stage the project is at currently, and most feel it is on track to deliver the desired outcomes, despite delays related to COVID-19. However, based on interview findings, it is clear that the project faced significant challenges from the beginning and that the early stages of the project were not as effective as they could have been. There are a number of reasons for this, notably that an ICT project such as this is complex and relatively difficult to manage, and requires specialist knowledge. Some of the challenges were unavoidable, including the significant amount of change to Machinery of Government (MoG), SIRA and staffing that occurred throughout, as well as changes to

procurement decisions. It is likely that some challenges may have been avoided or mitigated through greater clarity from the outset, a quality project management methodology, and a comprehensive data governance structure.

LACK OF CLARITY

The lack of clarity around project objectives, requirements, methodology and roles from the outset resulted in little shared understanding among stakeholders, which was likely the root of many issues faced during the project. In particular, the lack of clarity meant that decisions being made lacked coherence because they depended on that individual's understanding of the project, rather than a shared and agreed upon understanding among all stakeholders.

Some interviewees felt that if SIRA had engaged the ICT assurance process from the beginning there may have been clearer understanding of the technical requirements for the program. This would have been feasible given the budget for the project was greater than \$5M. Additionally, it was felt that greater technical knowledge among SIRA staff, the Steering Committee members and DAC, and better translation of technical issues for Directors on the Steering Committee, could have assisted in building a shared understanding.

Ultimately, these issues meant that time was spent clarifying requirements as the project progressed, which resulted in confusion and delays and significantly impacted momentum.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management was initially problematic and limited the ability of the project to address challenges during the foundation year. The main issue was that SIRA, the Department of Customer Service and DAC had different project management methodologies. This required extra time to navigate and compromise to meet competing requirements. Other challenges included the lack of a strong project management methodology within SIRA and the challenges with maintaining an agreed level of governance using agile methodology. Another key issue was the lack of strong governance or the lack of buy-in to the governance, and the lack of clarity around the project manager role once DAC became involved.

While the transition to engaging DAC as vendor posed challenges at first, there was generally a sense among interviewees that DAC's agile project management methodology provided a structured approach, and that the partnership is currently working effectively.

LACK OF DATA GOVERNANCE

The lack of a comprehensive data governance structure remains a critical issue, although a data working group has been convened and is currently working to address this issue.

LESSONS FOR CONSIDERATION

While the program has experienced a number of challenges, these have generated useful insights that can be applied not only to this program, but also to the management and implementation of future projects. Specifically, projects could be strengthened by:

- clearly defining business and technical requirements prior to commencing projects

- establishing effective project governance at the outset, including early prioritization of technical expertise in governance of projects and data governance (for data projects)
- developing thorough, integrated and documented project plans, supported by an agreed and appropriate project management approach.

1. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

1.1 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

One of the major schemes that the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) is responsible for regulating is workers compensation. Currently, the organisation has embarked on a major project to modernise the data systems that support this scheme. This has been launched in response to findings from internal audits and the Law and Justice Review, which identified issues with the data and analytics capabilities of the agency. The program is a multi-year project to develop a new platform for its Workers Compensation Scheme that is capable of near real-time capture, integration and visualisation of data from insurers.

Following a feasibility study completed by EY in March 2018, SIRA has undertaken foundational activities in FY18/19 to analyse its systems and requirements and develop a design for a new platform. The project aims to enable a near real-time data transfer from the approximately 80 insurers that report to SIRA, rather than the current six to eight weeks delay it experiences with claims and policy data. The system will also enable full transactional insight to the data rather than the current snapshot data received from insurers. This will strengthen the reliability and consistency of the data. Amendments will be on the source data earlier rather than up to three months later as is the current case.

This new data system will allow automatic reporting back to insurers on data issues and highlight actions insurers should take. This should enable SIRA to support faster returns to work and better outcomes for workers. In the future, SIRA should be able to utilise data to inform actions to prevent injuries and thus reduce the number of injured workers.

The program included the following activities, targets and deliverables.

- Design and test a foundational platform for data modernisation which can be used in future development both for Workers Compensation activities and for adaptation and implementation across other agencies and branches.
- Establish a Data Governance Framework including defining data stewardship, data custodians and the creation of a data dictionary for relevant data assets.
- Establish a consolidated and documented current data store which will act as a “single source of truth” for reporting platforms.
- Increase process efficiencies within the current Workers Compensation team, specifically, reduce regularly processing and data handling times by 10 days.
- Establish end-to-end transactional records for Work Status, Medical Certificates and Liability decisions
- Introduce new transactional data items such as Pharmaceuticals.
- Increase transparency of scheme performance through the development and publication of regular reporting.
- Implement a 360^o degree view of customer and service provider.

SIRA has partnered with the NSW Data Analytics Centre (DAC) to be the delivery vendor of the end-to-end operations for the project. The first Statement of Work (SoW) was entered into in November 2019, as the multi-year program commenced.

2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

ARTD was engaged to evaluate the Workers Compensation Data System Modernisation program from February to June 2020. The evaluation was designed to understand the activities that have been delivered in the foundational year and initial build phase and inform activities currently underway to develop and implement the new platform.

2.2 EVALUATION SCOPE

The scope of the evaluation was originally restricted to the analysis and design activities completed during the foundational year of 2018/19. This was expanded to include initial build and delivery activities that have been completed as part of the multi-year program because it was decided that it would be valuable to understand the life of the project to date.

2.3 PROGRAM LOGIC

The first stage of the evaluation involved working with the project team to develop a program logic (see Figure 1). A program logic is a one-page diagram that shows the important components of a program and its expected outcomes. The diagram lays out the set of inputs that are required to successfully implement the Workers Compensation Data System Modernisation program and how these link to the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the program.

The logic is read from the bottom to the top, with the lower-level outcomes being where SIRA has the largest amount of control, and higher-level outcomes where SIRA has least control.

At the base of the model are the problem conditions that necessitated the need for the program, including a lack of data on workers compensation claims to adequately regulate insurance companies, fulfill ministerial requests for information, and enable SIRA to be a customer-focused, evidence-based regulator.

Sitting above these are the inputs, human, financial and organisational, that the program requires to achieve its outcomes. These include funding for the foundational year and multi-year programs, project initiation documentation, the Workers Compensation Data System Modernisation Steering Committee, the SoW for DAC, engagement from internal and external stakeholders and a data governance framework.

The first necessary immediate outcome is that ODIN can ingest historic and future claims and policy data in near real-time via an application programming interface (API) without manual adjustments. If ODIN can achieve this, then SIRA should obtain all workers compensation data, insurers should be able to supply real-time data and receive real-time feedback on their data and ODIN will become a single source of truth for all claims and policy data. Staff

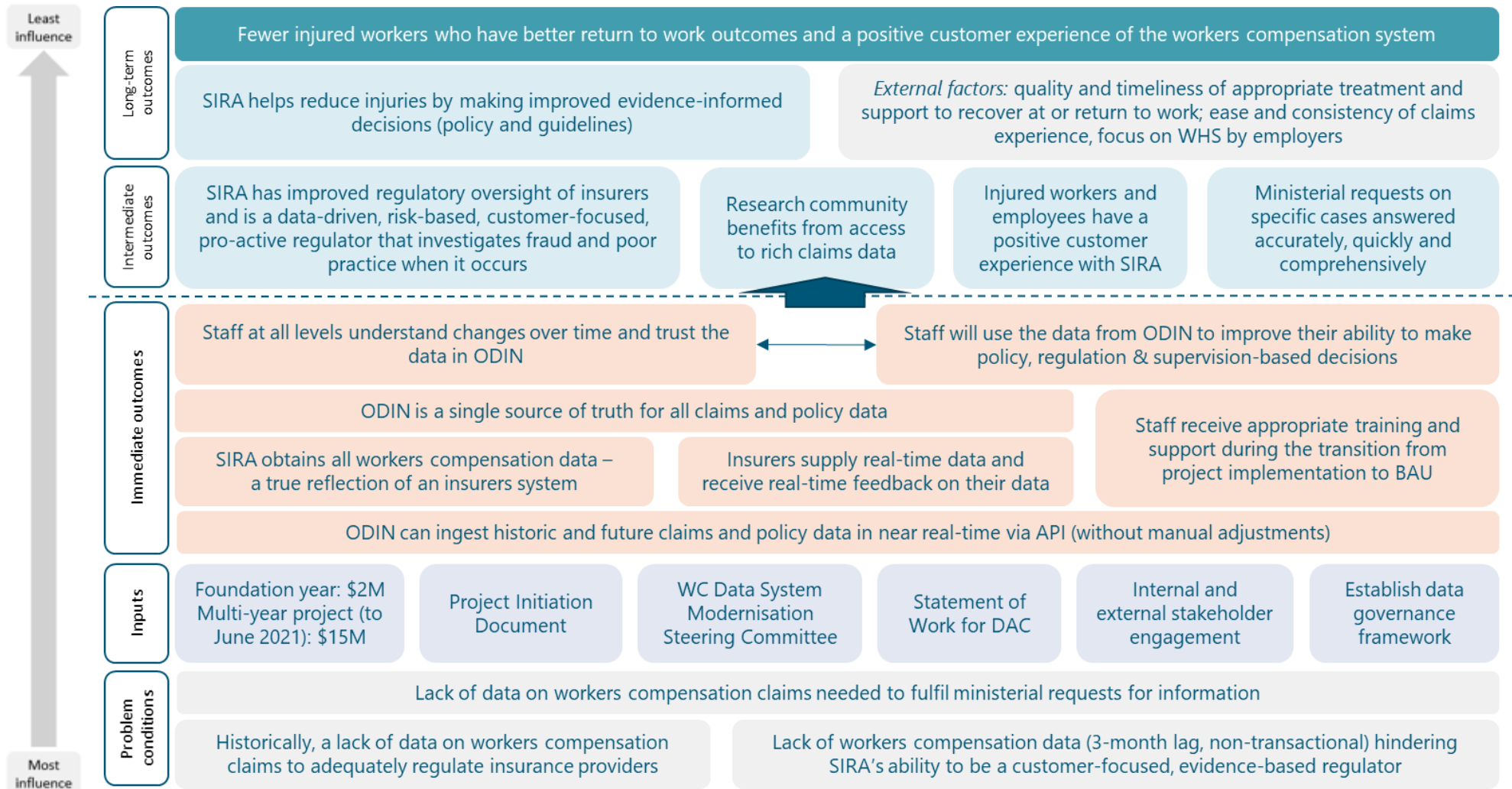
should also receive appropriate training and support during the transition from project implementation to business as usual. If ODIN becomes a single source of truth and staff receive appropriate training and support, then staff at all levels should then understand the changes being made over time and trust the data in ODIN, and use this data to improve their ability to make policy, regulation and supervision-based decisions.

If these immediate outcomes are achieved, the program should then be able to achieve its intermediate outcomes for SIRA, the research community, injured workers, employees and the system. Specifically, SIRA should have improved regulatory oversight of insurers and become a data-driven, risk-based, customer-focused, pro-active regulator that investigates fraud and poor practice as it occurs. The research community should benefit from access to detailed claims data. Injured workers and employees should have a positive customer experience with SIRA; and ministerial requests on specific cases should be answered accurately, quickly and comprehensively.

If these intermediate outcomes are achieved, the program should result in the long-term outcome of SIRA being able to help reduce injuries by making improved evidence-informed decisions in the form of policy and guidelines. Ultimately, this will lead to fewer injured workers with better return to work outcomes and a positive customer experience of the workers compensation system.

External factors (i.e. those outside of the control of SIRA) are recognised as impacting on program outcomes, particularly higher-level outcomes. These include: the quality and timeliness of appropriate treatment and support to recover at or return to work; the ease and consistency of the claims experience, and the degree to which employers focus on WHS.

FIGURE 1. WORKERS COMPENSATION DATA MODERNISATION PROGRAM LOGIC



2.4 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The following evaluation questions were developed in consultation with SIRA stakeholders to guide the evaluation activities:

- Have all program activities been implemented as intended?
- Were there any challenges encountered in delivering the foundational year of the project? If so, how can future projects avoid these challenges?
- How well was the project managed?
- What were the main learnings and outcomes from the project and were these useful?
- To what extent is the project meeting stakeholder needs?
- Did the single year activities provide the necessary foundation for the multi-year program?

2.5 EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach to answer the evaluation questions, drawing on information from existing administrative documents and interviews with selected key internal and external stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of activities. Table 1 presents a matrix linking each of the proposed methods with their ability to address the key evaluation questions.

TABLE 1. EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Evaluation question	Administrative documents	Program staff interviews	External stakeholder interviews
1. Have all program activities been implemented as intended?	X	X	X
2. Were there any challenges encountered in delivering the foundational year of the project? If so, how can future projects avoid these challenges?	X	X	X
3. How well was the project managed?	X	X	X
4. What were the main learnings and outcomes from the project and were these useful?	X	X	X
5. To what extent is the project meeting stakeholder needs?			X
6. Did the single year activities provide the necessary foundation for the multi-year program?	X	X	X

2.5.1 DESKTOP RESEARCH

ARTD completed a desktop analysis of program documentation. Stakeholders helped to identify which of the many documents attached to this project were most likely to contain information pertinent to answering the evaluation questions. The following documents were reviewed in depth to inform the evaluation:

- The Workers Compensation Automation Project Initiation Document (PID)/ Project Business Case (PBC), January 2018
- EY feasibility study to initiate the foundation year
- Workers Compensation Data System Modernisation (WCDSM) Project Delivery Plan
- All relevant and completed Stage Gate reviews by NSW ICT Assurance
- WCDSM Steering Committee Terms of Reference and meeting minutes
- Progress report meeting notes
- WCDSM Design Principles document
- WCDSM Multi-year project plan and business case
- First Statement of Work with NSW Data Analysis Centre
- WCDSM Benefits on a page and Lean Canvas benefits
- WCDSM Health Check – Single Year Business Case.

2.5.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

ARTD interviewed six people, including staff from SIRA and key external stakeholders. These stakeholders were selected using a purposive sample based on those who had the most detailed, strategic and operational knowledge of the project. Interviews explored:

- activities that had been completed and their implementation processes
- the effectiveness and appropriateness of activities
- challenges to implementation
- unexpected outcomes.

The interview guide is provided in Appendix 1.

2.5.3 CONFIDENCE IN THE FINDINGS

The methods were implemented largely as intended and there is sufficient evidence to identify lessons for consideration for management and implementation of the ongoing multi-year program and future SIRA projects. However, it was not always clear from program documentation what was scheduled to be delivered during the foundational year, and whether it was. Therefore, there is limited evidence about whether the foundational activities provided the necessary foundation for the multi-year program. It is also too early to tell whether the project has met stakeholder needs.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

According to interviewees, the foundation year program activities were generally implemented, although this is relatively difficult to determine given the lack of specificity about what was intended to be delivered during that first year. The single year business plan set out the objectives for the foundation year program activities and included a list of deliverables. However, it was unclear from reporting documentation (e.g. the 'WCDSM Fin Year End 2019 Deliverables' document) which deliverables have been achieved as the list of activities that have been delivered are not easily mapped against those listed in the business plan.

A general sense from interviewees was that the first year of the project was not particularly effective. There are a number of reasons for this, notably that an ICT project is complex and relatively difficult to manage, and requires specialist knowledge. In addition, there were delays in project commencement, unavoidable external influences (e.g. Machinery of Government (MoG) changes), and challenges that arose, which required changes to requirements and the way activities were implemented.

Ultimately, the multi-year program is now underway, with the DAC appointed as the vendor. The activities outlined in the first Statement of Work (SoW) have commenced, although there have been delays in delivery due to COVID-19.

Most interviewees, when asked whether the project had met stakeholder needs, responded that it is too early to tell as the product has not yet been delivered.

DID THE SINGLE YEAR ACTIVITIES PROVIDE A NECESSARY FOUNDATION?

Overall, the interviewees generally expressed the project is now on track and were satisfied with how it is being managed. However, they acknowledged that the foundation year had limited impact and that it was difficult to say whether the foundational activities provided the necessary foundation for the multi-year program. Challenges that arose during this period are outlined in the next section.

In the foundational year, there were a lot of limits on what could be achieved... There was no platform, we couldn't go to RFP [request for proposal], we built everything on the old platform, we subscribed and extended subscriptions on the old platform... when DAC took it on we could lift and shift and start. – Internal stakeholder

However, according to interviewees, there now appears to be a clear direction and a set of requirements and SoWs. In essence, a strong project management and governance structure is now in place and working. While there have been some additional delays due to COVID-19 and some concerns around resourcing, there is a general sense among interviewees that the relationship with DAC has strengthened and the project is now more likely to achieve a successful outcome.

The level of honesty and lines of communication have improved massively... there is improved communication between teams. Their knowledge of what's required is growing on a daily basis, stand ups are helping and [so is] the construction of nodes, etc. in new system. – Internal stakeholder

I am a lot more satisfied today than I was on day one. When we decided to bring DAC on board and they prepped the first SoW, we tried to explain the complexities of what was involved and that it was an analytics delivery and not a full platform end to end. MoG had got in the way. Timing for the first SoW was underestimated and it won't achieve everything we wanted to do by the end of April 2020, but we are still pretty much on track for final delivery. Even with COVID-19 related delays, we should still deliver under the budget we had estimated had we gone to tender. – Internal stakeholder

3.2 KEY CHALLENGES

There were a number of unavoidable issues that impacted the project during the foundational year. The issues are described in order of their relative importance, depending on how frequently the issue was mentioned by interviewees.

Many of the challenges discussed in this chapter relate to the transition to commissioning DAC as a vendor. However, it is important to emphasise that four interviewees noted that the relationship SIRA has with DAC has significantly improved over time. Overall, interviewees believed that the transition to DAC has had a number of benefits for the project, but the decision-making process has been a challenge.

ISSUES WITH DECISION MAKING

According to five interviewees, there were issues with and changes to decisions that resulted in delays in project implementation. Among the key concerns was the decision to engage DAC as the vendor for the multi-year program after going through the procurement process several times.

From interviews it seems that the concern is not so much about the decision itself, but the way in which it was made: at the end of two lengthy procurement approval processes and without clear direction about the project objectives or resource allocation.

Where the project was initially heading was to go to tender for a vendor to build the platform. A lot of work was done to develop the RFT [request for tender]. Then at a certain point it was decided that DAC would be the preferred supplier and that led to delays in the project and a fair bit of confusion among DAC as to what they wanted to do. – External stakeholder

I don't think that it was necessarily the right way to – not that DAC aren't the right people but the way it was imposed. It is hard for the Project Manager to be sure they are getting the right value and skills for the project. Also, a monopoly supplier is not particularly healthy. – External stakeholder

LACK OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSLATION

Four interviewees referred to the lack of technical knowledge among SIRA staff, the Steering Committee members and DAC. This proved particularly challenging for developing buy-in with internal SIRA stakeholders, each of whom had different interests, levels of data literacy and understandings of the requirements. Interviewees noted that technical experts from DAC did not always translate the technical issues for Directors on the Steering Committee to allow them to engage and comment. Conversely, DAC staff did not always understand the complexity of the Workers Compensation Scheme and its requirements.

With the people engaged to lead the project, they had project experience but didn't understand the complexities of workers compensation in NSW, weren't able to gauge the impacts of what it was they were trying to deliver. – Internal stakeholder

Every fortnight all directors are invited to DAC showcase. They can ask questions, get an update on progress. It is often too technical. Updates need to be put into business terms. – Internal stakeholder

An interviewee noted that ICT assurance was only brought in once there were problems, rather than early in the piece when they could have been avoided. ICT assurance is a process that supports NSW government organisations to manage ICT related risks, and must be used for projects with a budget of greater than \$5 million. At a budget of more than \$15 million, the Data Modernisation project should have used this from the start.

LACK OF CLARITY

Four interviewees made reference to the lack of clarity around project objectives, requirements, methodology and roles, which led to confusion and impacted momentum. It meant a lot of time was spent clarifying requirements as the project progressed, rather than during the scoping phase.

The lack of clarity exacerbated issues with decision making, and vice versa. It meant that decisions lacked coherence because they depended on that individual's understanding of the project, rather than a shared and agreed upon understanding among all stakeholders.

There was a bit of stop start with the project, especially initially, and I think the reason was that it was probably not clear if the project was about building a new IT infrastructure and just putting data on it, or about providing a modern IT infrastructure to meet the needs of the business. There are two different priorities. – External stakeholder

There was clearly a line of thought that we just build an IT platform and the business requirements will come later; I approach it from a different angle – you need to understand the requirements first before you understand what to build. Needed to be clarified earlier. – External stakeholder

LACK OF DATA GOVERNANCE

Four interviewees identified the lack of data governance and lack of understanding about the importance of data governance within SIRA as key challenges. They found it particularly

concerning that the data governance framework has not yet been prioritised, given the level of sensitive data SIRA collects, the number of different stakeholders who have access to this data, and the need to protect and strictly govern all data in the transition to the new platform.

My concern is that we are building a new system that needs to be supported with stewardship, sharing protocols, change management procedures, security and compliance. DAC will be expecting us to tell them what we require. – Internal stakeholder

[A lack of data governance] has made it hard to get buy-in from Directors in SIRA. This is demonstrated in their presence in the showcases. Previously, they didn't see what they did as playing with data – data was a means to support the work they did. The literacy is improving in that area now... If we had done the data governance framework first, before starting the project, it would have helped, even if it was just underway. The whole direction of the project would have been different. – Internal stakeholder

A data working group has since been convened and is currently working to address this outstanding issue.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Another challenge noted by four interviewees was the level of change occurring outside the organisation. This included Machinery of Government changes, the establishment of SIRA and, more recently, a redirection of DAC's resources to capture COVID-19 data.

There have been a lot of changes occurring throughout, which have had an effect on project velocity. It was early in the piece as SIRA and Department of Finance, Services and Innovation were newly formed and working together. They had different views on tech, platforms, whose policy and procedures to follow... MoG changes have also seen significant staff in temporary positions or vacant positions....SIRA was also completely re-aligning....SIRA has changed its approach; as part of joining the Department of Customer Service as opposed to DFSI, SIRA's role as regulator has shifted to customer. This has resulted in some delays in decision making, which tied into us going to the DAC. – Internal stakeholder

RESOURCING ISSUES

Issues with resourcing were raised by four interviewees. In considering the issues they raised, it seems that the foundational year was highly (perhaps over) resourced, but that a reduction in resources in the transition to DAC as vendor is a concern.

[The project was] over-resourced in the foundational year for what it was delivering, which is why we have seen a lot of the team engaged by SIRA released until December last year. – Internal stakeholder

They [DAC] are significantly under-resourced to build the end to end platform we require. – Internal stakeholder

I don't think we have had adequate resources devoted to our program that we need to meet our targets. We're getting 20% or 30%. We missed the first two delivery dates – they weren't critical dates, they were milestones that they [DAC] put in, but that is potentially indicative that there is more and more work going forward. Resourcing will hurt us. – Internal interviewee

Interviewees expressed doubts as to whether DAC has sufficient resources to complete the work.

STAFF TURNOVER

Two interviewees found high staff turnover particularly challenging. This included high Executive turnover (meaning the Steering Committee changed frequently) and SIRA's reliance on contractors, which results in a loss of business knowledge and domain expertise. According to interviewees, there is a need to ensure that knowledge is kept or transferred, perhaps through longer-term contracts (i.e. longer than 3–6 months) or other mechanisms.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Interviewees' views on how well the project was managed varied. While many identified issues with project management, a number also highlighted the benefits that had come from navigating some of these challenges. In general, there appeared to be a view that while there had been challenges initially, the approach to project management has subsequently improved.

The first key challenge, which was raised by three interviewees, was that there were differences in project management methodologies between SIRA, the Department of Customer Service and DAC. The change to commissioning DAC as the vendor resulted in a shift to using agile project management methodology, which is common in ICT projects but was unfamiliar to SIRA and the Steering Committee. This required extra time to navigate and compromises had to be made to meet competing requirements.

Little bit of battle in terms of whose process to follow. – Internal stakeholder

It's been very much a clash of or morphing of two different approaches. – External stakeholder

Two interviewees also identified other methodological challenges, including a lack of a strong project management methodology within SIRA. SIRA does not appear to have an organisation-wide approach to project management, instead leaving it to project managers to determine and follow their own methods. Potentially, if a project manager is not experienced or capable, a lack of project management methodology may lead to poorly managed projects. Once the project moved to DAC, which uses agile methodology, it provided a structured approach, improving the management of the project.

One thing I would say is that the agile methodology that DAC are driven by involves quite a bit of business involvement and commitment and I suspect that DAC have struggled to

get that commitment... Business has to buy into the process big time and they don't have resources to do that. – External stakeholder

I like the agile delivery path with kind of waterfall drops. It is a much easier delivery method to go along. There is not as much administration and red tape as in the past. If anything, we didn't have governance, but we inbuilt too much, just not the right governance. – Internal stakeholder

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Another key issue, raised by three interviewees, was the lack of strong governance or lack of buy-in to the governance that was present. This was exacerbated by the shift to the agile methodology, although the issues with governance predated this transition.

[There are] several other projects that are in trouble – common theme across them would be the Steering Committee and governance, the basic disciplines of running projects is not there. – External stakeholder

[DAC] take an agile approach – give us the money and we will deliver. The Steering Committee still want monthly reports on progress and issues, which in the agile world is seen as a bit of overhead. This is not uncommon but does reflect that we [the Steering Committee] have a business case driven approach to things financially, but the delivery focus is more driven by productivity. – External stakeholder

One interviewee did note, however, that the project had managed to overcome some of the issues associated with a lack of governance by delivering reports to the Steering Committee, which have been critical for focusing decisions and providing the data the Committee needs.

Two interviewees also noted that the lack of clarity about the role of the project manager and where the role of project management sat once DAC became involved.

The project was well managed. Where it became a bit less successful was once DAC became involved. It became not clear to me where the project management landed – DAC or SIRA? – External stakeholder

OTHER PROJECT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Other less frequently identified issues, linked to some of challenges, above included:

- a lack of appropriate documentation, particularly a detailed project management plan
- personality conflicts and difficulties, including those associated with having two project managers.

If I go back to foundational year... there was a person who was engaged on the project who was trying to drive the project forward and was coming across in an adversarial way, but it was because they could see that there was no momentum and trying to get it working. The interpretation of what they were trying to do wasn't perceived well. – Internal stakeholder

4. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS TO CONSIDER

4.1 CONCLUSION

Overall, the interviewees expressed satisfaction with the project as it currently stands and that it was on track to deliver the desired outcomes. However, it is also clear that the project has faced significant challenges from the beginning and that the early stages of the project were not as effective as they could have been. There are a number of reasons for this, notably that an ICT project can be complex and difficult to manage, and requires specialist knowledge. As such, the absence of a quality approach to project management and lack of engagement of the ICT assurance process from the beginning resulted in a lack of clarity and shared understanding that likely served as the root of many of the issues faced during the project. While it has since improved, it was evident that a lack of clarity early on resulted in significant delays to project delivery.

There was a significant amount of change occurring around this project including MoG changes, the establishment of SIRA itself, and significant staff turnover both at a project and executive levels (including changes in the Steering Committee). All of this created uncertainty and delays.

Procurement decisions also caused significant delays and made it difficult for the project to develop and maintain momentum. It is not clear whether this could have been avoided. There were also challenges associated with transitioning to working with the new vendor, DAC—particularly due to the differing project management approaches taken by the two organisations. In addition, DAC is perhaps under resourced for the role, having had to expand to be able to develop the product. Finally, on both sides, there was a lack of technical knowledge (for SIRA, a lack of ICT knowledge and for DAC, a lack of knowledge about Workers Compensation) and an inability to translate existing knowledge effectively to support quality communication. However, these challenges have substantially improved over time, and compromises have resulted in an approach that is working effectively.

The lack of a comprehensive data governance structure remains a critical issue. A data working group has been convened and is currently working to address this issue.

4.2 LESSONS FOR CONSIDERATION

While the program has experienced a number of challenges, these have generated useful insights that can be applied not only to this program, but also to the management and implementation of future projects. Specifically, projects could be strengthened by:

- clearly defining business and technical requirements prior to commencing projects
- establishing effective project governance at the outset, including early prioritization of technical expertise in governance of projects and data governance (for data projects)
- developing thorough, integrated and documented project plans, supported by an agreed and appropriate project management approach.

APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello [interviewee], my name is [interviewer] from ARTD Consultants. I am calling to chat with you about Workers Compensation Data Modernisation process evaluation. Is now still a good time to talk? Thank you for taking the time to talk with me as part of the evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand the process of delivering the project during the foundational year in 2018/19. We are interested in finding out what worked well, what some of the challenges were and what could be improved about the delivery process.

The information you provide is confidential and you will not be personally identified in any way.

Do you mind if I record the call, just for my note taking purposes only?

Do you have any questions for me before we start?

Questions

1. Could you please tell me about your role and involvement in the project?
2. Were any of the activities delayed, and for what reasons?
3. What pleased you about the how the project activities were implemented?
4. How well was the project managed? What would you do differently in retrospect and why? Prompt: how were risks managed, did the project have the right staff with right skills, appropriate processes, how were delays managed?
5. How well did the governance structures support project delivery? What would you do differently on future projects?
6. Are you aware of any challenges encountered during the project? What did you do to address them? How can future projects avoid or overcome similar challenges?
7. We understand the data governance framework hasn't been fully implemented, do you know why that is? How could similar risks be managed on future projects?
8. What surprised you about how the project activities were implemented? Were there any consequences for SIRA or the project?
9. What would you do differently if you were setting up a similar project and why?
10. Are you satisfied with the DACs role in the project?
11. What is working well about their role? What are some of the challenges in working with the DAC?
12. How could SIRA work better with the DAC? What would you do differently if you were to collaborate again and why?
13. Do you have any comments you would like to make about the project?