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**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON
THURSDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2026.**

FOLLOW UP AUDIT: ICT STRATEGY, CRITICAL SYSTEMS AND INVESTMENT

CHAIR - Thank you, Minister and your team for appearing before the Public Accounts Committee and our inquiry into a follow-up review of the Report of the Auditor-General from 2020, Information and Communications Technology Strategy, Critical Systems and Investment. We appreciate the information you've provided. It was quite a deal of information, which is really helpful. Thank you for that.

The purpose is for the Committee to look at whether you have adopted the recommendations. If so, how? If you haven't, why not? I noticed some of your recommendations and noted as accepted in principle, as opposed to in full. It would be helpful to have that clarified as to that difference.

Dr JUSTIN THURLEY, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, and **Ms NOELENE KELLY**, DEPUTY SECRETARY COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you. This is being broadcast and the transcript will form part of our report, as required. Over to you, Minister.

Ms OGILVIE - Good to see you all and thank you for the opportunity to appear today. As the Committee would be aware, the Auditor-General's report relating to ICT strategy, critical systems and investment audit was tabled in parliament in October 2020. It's important to clarify the interrelationship between this audit and two significant Government initiatives that were progressed around the same time, that is, the Tasmanian State Service Review and the development of Tasmania's digital transformation strategy, which is called Our Digital Future.

Furthermore, all three undertakings were initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic, an event that fundamentally reframed the role of ICT in Government and accelerated a shift towards innovative, agile and rapidly deployed technology solutions. Thus, the recommendations from the ICT audit were not acted on in isolation. Instead, they were systematically integrated into both the Our Digital Future and the Tasmanian State Service Review strategies and documents.

For example, the ICT audit's focus on strengthening cross-agency digital infrastructure was directly reflected in Our Digital Future's strategic priorities. Similarly, the Tasmanian State Service Review adopted the audit's emphasis on unified governance and oversight, resulting in the establishment of the data and digital subcommittee, which now oversees whole-of-Government digital priorities and facilitates cross-agency planning and coordination. These and other reforms have strengthened whole-of-Government oversight, prioritisation and delivery of data and digital initiatives.

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Since 2020-21, the Government has more than tripled its investment in ICT programs. This is guided by strategic planning at both the agency and whole-of-Government levels. Our Digital Future has also been instrumental in driving a range of strategic digital programs and ICT investments that have delivered tangible results and benefits to the Tasmanian community. An increased number of ICT initiatives have progressed through the Structured Infrastructure Investment Review Process, which we all know as SIIRP; and agencies now maintain critical ICT asset registers, helping Government to build a more consistent and unified overview of its critical assets. These outcomes demonstrate our Government's commitment to its digital transformation agenda and our ability to translate strategy into action.

Just a little bit on the numbers: Government has more than tripled its investment in ICT programs since 2021, with investment up from \$26.5 million in 2021 to \$93.8 million in the current budget. That's a year-on-year increase from 2.5 per cent in 2021 to 11 per cent in the current budget. Thank you.

CHAIR - Okay. In ease of reporting for the Committee, we will work through each of the recommendations, acknowledging there's quite a bit of overlap. If you can identify particularly where you want to speak to more than one recommendation, if we have a question on that.

I will go to Recommendation 1. This is one of the recommendations that was accepted in principle. You talked earlier about the multiple bodies of work going on around the same time. If you can explain to us the principle that was accepted, rather than the detail of the recommendation and why that decision?

Ms OGILVIE - Sure. I agree with your approach. Why don't I tackle this - I will give you the information that I have. But please bear in mind we do have our CIO at the table. I'm really happy to just open that door at any time for a broader conversation or more details. Does that approach work for you?

CHAIR - That's fine. We're happy to hear from the CIO because I'm sure he's right across it.

Ms OGILVIE - Absolutely. Also, the original body of work happened before I was the relevant Minister, so he probably has a bit more of the background.

In relation to Recommendation 1, which is whole-of-Government ICT vision and investment prioritisation, while the 2020 audit identified gaps in ICT strategy and planning, our Government has delivered a clear digital direction through that Our Digital Future Strategy that I spoke of earlier and its accompanying strategic action plan. Our Digital Future was released in June 2020, setting out our strategic direction for digital transformation and our commitment to improving services, economic opportunity and outcomes for Tasmania.

Following the pandemic, the strategic action plan was released to accelerate digital initiatives, including the development of a whole-of-Government technology road map to really guide that ICT investment, our modernisation and to help prioritise those activities. Many elements of the road map have since been incorporated into the annual work program of our data and digital sub-Committee, which is a good thing, ensuring alignment between strategic direction and practical delivery within Government.

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The whole-of-Government ICT investment is now guided through a strengthened digital governance model centred on the data and digital Committee. That's at the heart of the organisational strategy and its work plan. This provides, we think, clearer oversight, prioritisation and better alignment across Government agencies.

That's probably where I will stop and just turn to the Committee to see if that answers your question, or if perhaps you would like more from the CIO.

CHAIR - From my perspective, there's a number of areas the Auditor-General pointed to, like each agency's ICT assets, their age profile, key risks and interdepartmental reliance on the proposed replacement timetable. I know you have increased the investment in ICT. Perhaps not so much in the Parliament, but anyway.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, I have heard that recently. We will have a look at it.

CHAIR - Yes, right. When I went through the information provided, it wasn't clear to me - and this may be covered better under another recommendation, whether or not you have all the critical assets across each department and agency. Or is that still a work in progress?

Ms OGILVIE - It's a good question. This is about how we organise our IT leadership internally. I do think it's one that our CIO would be best placed to answer, if he's happy to do that, because it is well organised.

Dr THURLEY - If it's okay, I will go back to the idea of the in-principle agreement of the recommendation. I think that the big difference is that we, as a Government, agreed on the intent of the audit. But the particular mechanisms that were put into the recommendations, we didn't necessarily agree with the way forward, particularly in the contemporary way and with the changing nature of digital and ICT, particularly during the pandemic and then post the pandemic as well. It really was a bit of a reform for us.

Not only that. The reforms that we identified through the State Service Review and the work that was done in this particular work with Our Digital Future, we identified that to make the strategy work properly, we need good governance. Governance is part of the recommendations further on, but it is something that was completely overhauled and through the secretary's board, we established a subcommittee of Government called the Data and Digital Committee that was given the remit of oversight of whole-of-Government activity and to coordinate the agencies around their risks and their ICT policies and also to collaborate on projects and initiatives that were core or common across Government.

Mr WINTER - It's a general question, maybe to you, Minister, but I am happy for anyone else to answer. Is it the Government's view that we're heading towards a whole-of-Government ICT department? As I understand it, every department still has its own IT team managing its own IT environment. You talked a little about a collaboration between departments where they can, which is good, but is it the Government's view that at some point in time we need to bring things together under a single entity, or are we going to continue with the separated model?

Ms OGILVIE - I will start that answer and then the CIO will be able to add some more information. We operate in a matrix environment and it's one of the questions that every large organisation has about the value of centralisation versus a more matrixed and distributed

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model. It is really helpful for our departments to have capacity in their departments to be at the front line to manage and deploy information IT projects, et cetera, and to understand what's happening at that front line and be able to feed that back up the food chain.

We have Dr Thurley here, who is the CIO who sits right across all of that. Sorry if I'm going too far, but Dean, I suspect part of your question is about the funding line and being able to map where the spend sits and goes within each department. I think that question which has been raised over many years is one for the CIO because it's also with Treasury as well, but what I will say is, given the matrix environment that we operate in at the moment, the institution of the Data and Digital Committee that we have now has helped to smooth conversations across divisions, which is really helpful, so those whole-of-Government-type projects, and we're seeing some dialogue around the AI issue at the moment that are going to affect everybody, are about how we best manage that and make sure we're deploying that safely and well across all departments.

Justin, if it's okay, I might refer to you for a bit more of a deep dive, for the benefit of the Committee, on how it is currently structured. You might have some opinions about how we might do things better.

Dr THURLEY - Yes, I can elaborate on how the Committee's structured, by all means. The current Data and Digital Committee has all the CIOs across the agencies in one place, so we have everybody in the digital and ICT space, but we also include a number of other stakeholders who have different standings in terms of how our work is impacted or that we need their support or advice to move a lot of the whole-of-Government things together. We also include people from the Office of the Solicitor-General and some information management specialists as well.

To the heart of the question that was asked - the centralisation versus decentralisation issue - I won't go into opinions because I can't, but I can certainly put on the table where Government policy sits at the moment and how we achieve the sort of centralisation that is part of some of our success.

At the moment, it is Government policy that there's autonomy within the agencies and it's into the management and accountabilities of risk. I won't go further into that because I think it's pretty well understood how that works, and that does change some nuances in terms of how you have to manage what priorities across agencies, so they're different across agencies, but at the same time we understand we have a lot of commonality and a lot of things that we do would benefit from sharing capability, which is something the Tasmanian Government is very good at, even though we're not fully centralised like some of the other jurisdictions.

The way we achieve that is we have digital strategies and services within DPAC, which provides a range of shared infrastructure services, and we also look after shared common systems across Government, but not all of them. For example, Networking Tasmania and the networks the Government and this establishment relies on is all part of a central whole-of-Government network. That's something that no other state in Australia really has to the extent that we have. That's all shared and managed out of DSS.¹ We also have examples that we deal with. We manage telecommunications and communications in general, all the communication services, all through DSS as a central and shared service. We also provide other services to

¹ Digital Strategy and Services

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Governments such as the HR system and we look after the fines management infrastructure. There's a range of other services. I won't go into every one of them -

Mr WINTER - Is the HR system you mentioned the HRIS?²

Dr THURLEY - That's the HR Empower system, which is the current legacy HR system. DPAC is also undertaking the whole-of-Government HR transformation, which is the HRIS which will replace that system and will assume similar sorts of shared capability across Government.

Mr WINTER - Is it the intention that that will oversee all departments?

Dr THURLEY - It is the intention.

Mr WINTER - How far progressed is that?

Dr THURLEY - Substantially, without going into the -

CHAIR - It's been having a very long gestation, this one.

Mr WINTER - Is it still in the Department of Health?

Dr THURLEY - No, it's been transferred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Mr WINTER - It hasn't been rolled out in Department of Health?

Dr THURLEY - Parts of it have been rolled out in the Department of Health. The Department of Health started the process. We have then picked it up to make it go whole-of-Government.

Mr WINTER - The Department of Health commenced the project but didn't see it to the end and instead transferred it to DPAC. Is that now under your area or a different part of DPAC? I'm sorry, this is probably a stupid question for you, you live it every day.

Dr THURLEY - The HRIS has been transferred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet with the view that we have the services and capabilities to take that across Government. It's sort of part of DSS's bread and butter, but there is also a dedicated program team that sits within DPAC that is actually moving that transformation along. I just want to emphasise that the transformation is not just systems and software, it's about the people and change across the Tasmanian State Service. It's a fairly significant piece of work and a bit of change management. Software is only part of the equation and there's quite a bit of work involved to move that along. At the moment the focus is on the organisation and the human capital management component in that software.

Mr WINTER - Just so I'm really clear, HRIS is intended to be whole-of-Government. It started in Health, it's now gone to DPAC where it will be rolled out first.

Dr THURLEY - Whole-of-Government.

² Human Resources Information System

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CHAIR - It wasn't made live in Health, though - or was it?

Dr THURLEY - There are elements of it that are live in Health, but not all parts of it are live, if that makes sense.

Ms THOMAS - Is it just human resources?

Dr THURLEY - I emphasise that it's a broad level. It is human resources, but it's the broader area of domain of room and resources which would include WHS,³ safety, et cetera. It also includes rostering and payroll and human capital management.

Ms THOMAS - But not information management.

Dr THURLEY - Information management associated with people, yes.

Ms THOMAS - Justice has another system that's been supposedly going to be rolled out for years and lots invested in, but not quite there. Is that for a separate purpose?

Dr THURLEY - I can't speak to that unless I know exactly the system you're talking about.

Ms THOMAS - I can't remember the name. Not Justice Connect.

CHAIR - No, there's another project that's been going on for about as long as HRIS.

Mr WINTER - Out of the auditor's report, it said there was no comprehensive information from agencies supporting the whole-of-Government framework for informing investment priorities, nor was there a comprehensive approach to identifying shared functionality such as human resources or finance, where more effective and efficient service delivery could be achieved. If we're talking about the response to this report, governs our moves to having a focus on deploying a whole-of-Government HR system, which is HRIS, what's the timeline for implementing HRIS across the department?

Dr THURLEY - The timeline for the HRIS at the moment is through the next two years. In the budget papers you can see where the dollars are going and what's happening with that. There is an active program with associated governance which is across the secretary's board and down into the various Committees that need to basically run the programme like that. That includes the likes of commercial aspects of it, the system roles and ownership.

We also have the implementation program which is going ahead right as we speak. We also have the other components that need to be planned and mapped out. It's part of a broader road map for the overall program. That includes the likes of rostering, when we get it, how it goes in, the WHS and how we get the safety systems in and working. They can be somewhat run independently, but they're all dependent on the core: so, you can understand that there's a two-year remaining program to get this work ahead. What happens is, as the project progresses, we will obviously have understanding updates, and we plan on implementing payroll in two years time.

³ Work Health and Safety

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Mr WINTER - I could keep going but won't, because I'm sure other people have questions.

CHAIR - Back to what Dean alluded to on centralisation rather than partial decentralisation. How do you then avoid duplication in that model? We all know that in the past we've had ticketing systems put in place that have cost many more millions of dollars than expected, and then someone else does it, whether it's a GBE⁴ or whoever. What's the process there to avoid duplication under the current model?

Dr THURLEY - The data and digital Committee meets once a month. That Committee has remit and a road map - not so much a road map, but a work plan - that actually looks at various objectives we have at a whole-of-Government level, which gives the opportunity, when you go through a planning process, just like many people would plan -

CHAIR - Is that the one that was provided to us?

Dr THURLEY - Yes, that's a 2025 one, or earlier; and we've just completed today and gone through the new iteration of that. Typically, what we put on there is where we see systems that are either core systems to Government and any changes that we're making to them, and/or if there are new systems coming on board in other agencies we think can reduce duplication, if it's the right word, we talk about whether we put them on the list for oversight or whether we are supporting them in some way.

For example, there might be an identity management system being implemented in the Department of Health. We will know through the conversations we have, and we are continually updating our conversations every month about what systems are coming on, what new procurements they might be making. Then we can look at them and say, that's something our department or another department wants to solve.

CHAIR - They don't actually go to full procurement until they've run it through this Committee? They don't go off on a frolic of their own?

Dr THURLEY - That's right, it's a very collaborative and standard approach. I guess we have to be understanding the agencies need to produce outcomes aligned to their accountabilities and risks. However, it is very clear, and made very clear during our meetings, what activity is undertaken in those departments, and if there's anything new coming up, we would know about it.

It's a jurisdictional thing for us that we're actually fairly - as I said, it's a Tasmanian thing too - we're very close together to be able to work together. We share the information quite readily. We meet every week in a stand-up meeting to discuss the issues and if there are new things we need to bring onto the table we will bring them up.

Ms THOMAS - I did a quick Google search and found this:

The Tasmanian Department of Justice's \$35.2 million Justice Connect Astria is a major IT overhaul aimed at replacing outdated paper-based and manual

⁴ Government Business Enterprise

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systems with an integrated end-to-end digital solution. In 2023, Audit Tasmania noted that the project was not initially effectively planned and monitored for benefits realisation.

Maybe it's the topic of another audit report that needs follow up, if there's one; but is that separate to this HRIS system, both very significant investments of taxpayer money. Are they for different purposes and both though seem to have faced really complex rollouts and delays?

Dr THURLEY - Through you Minister?

Ms OGILVIE - Yep, please go.

Dr THURLEY - You've actually brought up a really good point. Yes, Justice Connect for a different purpose for identifying - as Justice did in the days that the first instance that was initiated - identified a whole range of systems that needed to be replaced and integrated. The system is complex, I will give you that. It is a very complicated process but it also it's been very successful at bringing systems together and centralising a lot of the work that's been done around the core systems that Justice needs to operate on.

That was one of the programs that was invested in and through the broad level thinking across Government to say we do understand that Justice is doing this work - what type of work they're doing. They obviously brought in people from different agencies to help with the governance of it once we ran into a few little hiccups and things. I think it's a good example of that we understand that the how the assets are replenished - the life cycles are addressed - the loss of users are addressed. Also, that it is actually that particular program is a Justice specific - capabilities that are being addressed in in that space.

Ms THOMAS - Will they also use HRIS alongside that?

Dr THURLEY - Yes, they will. There's no overlap realistically apart from potentially identity within the HRIS being the system of record for employees.

CHAIR - One thing I did ask about and it may be better covered somewhere else - was have you really clear oversight of all departments and agencies, key assets, their age and status of them and a replacement schedule or whatever?

Dr THURLEY - This is good as well, because this is a journey that we've been on since this audit and obviously it is clear to understand what your assets are and what replacement cycles you need. Again, just to get into focus here - was really the agencies, because of that autonomy and the risk appetites and everything being controlled at agency level, we needed to make sure the agencies were undertaking that type of work.

There's been an absolute concerted effort by every agency in the Tasmanian Government to get their - what I would probably more refer to as ICT infrastructure planning - under control and build those asset lists and know what their assets are. There's been different approaches taken in different departments. I understand and acknowledge the auditor raised that. At the same time these were necessary for the type of systems et cetera they are running.

For example, in Health there are some complexities and information that you must be aware of and involved in versus say something you might have in DPAC - there'd be less

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information held about a particular attribute of a system. You will see that there's some nuanced part of it.

What was really critical to us was to say you are all doing this and you're actually getting this done and we've got evidence of it. We'd actually provide some evidence to the Committee on that. Probably it's actually enabled us once we've got to this stage of maturity in handling it we're actually about to take the next step, which is actually to really focus on what intent the auditor wanted. Do we know what's critical across all of Government?

CHAIR - Do you?

Dr THURLEY - Yes. Well, to an extent that we understand where the pinch points are. We've got some issues, in fact it's very connected to how we do cybersecurity as you can imagine. We have just recently last year initiated a program to look at what we would describe as the critical assets of Government or systems of significance to Government. So that we can actually get on top of - at a whole of Government level of understanding where really are the crown jewels of all the Government. What are the asset issues we might have and how does that with other system dependencies?

We have started that process now we're about 85 per cent through getting to a point where we can say what the lifeline services are for Government and say what the critical assets, ICT assets are that are connected to those services. Therefore, we can actually employ a range of risk management controls including, do your replace assets that are, out of date or is that one a cybersecurity one we need to really focus on keeping it protected, et cetera - there's a range of benefits.

Mr WINTER - How much of that is moving from physical -

CHAIR - We're really in Recommendation 2 now, but keep going.

Mr WINTER - How much of that is moving from physical infrastructure to cloud-based and is that a part of the strategy?

Dr THURLEY - Thank you for that one. Migration from on-premises to cloud has been a big part of a lot of our work in recent years. From back in 2020 we established the 'cloud policy' and it's still there in place. We're probably looking to review that now because there's been massive transition into cloud-based services. That comes with - it de-risks a lot of what we do, but it also introduced new types of risks that we are actively managing.

Mr WINTER - Does that still include the on-island cloud preference, or has that gone now?

Dr THURLEY - No, that preference was removed from the policy. I can't remember what date it was, but yes, for obvious reasons.

CHAIR - This is in response to Recommendation 2. You provided a number of examples of the work plan of the subcommittee, which we just referenced, and a number of agencies' plans. Are there any that are still outstanding that haven't done this work?

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Dr THURLEY - Look, there'd be no one that hasn't done any of this work. It is more about the type and extent of that work. Sorry, Minister, I should have -

Ms OGILVIE - No, please go ahead. I would stop you if - please go ahead.

Dr THURLEY - Yes, everybody has undertaken the planning processes.

CHAIR - Who hasn't completed the process?

Dr THURLEY - Completed the process? Everyone's completed a process, yes. And it's an ongoing, continuous process, as you can imagine. Every year we review it. Probably more often than that nowadays.

CHAIR - The initial assessment of what are significantly aged assets or at risk of failure, you could confidently say that across the whole of state Government, you're aware of where those pinch points are?

Ms KELLY - What my comment to that would be is that, that work that Justin was just talking about then at a whole-of-Government level, that's still underway. We don't have a document for example, that would say, 'Here's the 100 systems that Government has and this is the order of priority, and this is their legacy,' and so on. We've got that information from agencies and we're just working through now, at that whole-of-Government level. In regard to Recommendation 1, what I would say is there's still ongoing work in that particular recommendation.

CHAIR - Well, that's Recommendation 2 as well.

Ms KELLY - Yes.

CHAIR - The plan is, then, to have that all sort of in one, I will call it 'document' for want of a better word, so that it's really clear what's out there, what's at risk of failure or needing to be - what's critical, what's not, what's at risk of failure. Then you will start the prioritisation after that? Or are you doing the prioritisation as you go?

Ms KELLY - My expectation is that we would be in a position where we can advise Government and advise secretaries of the department about legacy and ageing infrastructure, and the risk associated with that, and to be able to give them advice based on the recommendation from the data and digital Committee about what priority order investments should be made, and the consequence if we don't.

CHAIR - What is the timeframe from having that sort of level of completion - well, the completion of one part of a whole ongoing process, obviously?

Dr THURLEY - Hopefully, I'm getting the ... this question right. The main thing is, if we identify a system that, you know, we say, 'Look, this is a risk to Government and needs to be replaced.' or there's other issues with it, because that's not just about systems, and there's no life-cycle road map plan in place for that system, which I'd be very surprised about. But you can understand that there are complex systems in Government that actually do have some issues like that. The idea with that we would go through a process of understanding what the options

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are to move forward. Build a plan, business case with investment options for how to replace those systems. That's a very common approach that's done.

It's done in different ways. It can be purely brought in as do the work and do a budget bid and say, 'Look, we need to replace the system. This is a risk to Government'. That process is well understood, and you've probably seen the evidence of that coming through.

There are also scenarios where we're not sure about what has to happen next and we need to run a bit of a process to understand that. Or we want to make some change to that investment, which we then use the Structured Infrastructure Investment Review Process (SIIRP) for, which is part of the audit recommendations too. The SIIRP process gives us a chance to do the investment options, understand the business case and have a stage-gated sort of approach to say, 'We're off. Where do we go next? Is it an investment option here or is it that way? Or do we do nothing and decide to hold that risk?'

Mr WINTER - This audit you're doing of the infrastructure, is that directly responding to Recommendation 2, or is that something that has happened organically out of the other work you're doing?

Dr THURLEY - This process is, I would say, not directly responding to this audit because we would say that the changes and reforms that we have undertaken since 2020 have brought us to a point where we have a more mature process for this. We've got to a point where we're actually saying, well, if we do this, we can have a range of outcomes for Government by going through this process. We're capable of delivering the information. (B), we're actually able to use that information for a different range of purposes, not just for life-cycle planning but, potentially and more interestingly, for security and potentially for emergency management as well. You can see there's a range of spin-offs for us, and now we're in a really good position to exploit those capabilities that we've built.

CHAIR - It will become easier, perhaps, to take a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach? If suddenly something fails or it's at imminent risk of failure, you will be able to identify those assets earlier and schedule replacement, or new systems, or whatever?

Dr THURLEY - I will use an example of how powerful this can be. We have, in the Department of Health, and you can understand, a very complicated environment. They've initiated a program around their asset management to see those assets and those dependencies in real time. In other words, they know exactly where it's connected, what's happening at any point in time and they just show the dependencies all the way from the business service through to the end asset. That's ultimately the goal that we would like to see for all of Government. But, as you can imagine, that'd be complicated.

CHAIR - We did speak about that at a previous Committee hearing here a year or two ago.

Dr THURLEY - I think we did actually. Having that in place and being able to take that type of approach to whole-of-Government would be a massive step forward. We see it from a security and observability point of view: that we can see what's going on before or as it's happening. It gives us a massive advantage in that space.

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As I said, to get to that point, we need to have invested in the capabilities at the low end, the ability to gather the information about those assets and technology from 2020, versus where technology is in 2025-2026. There are capabilities now of those little agents that can gather up this information and help us with that automated data collection.

CHAIR - In the executive summary of the Auditor-General's report, he makes the comment:

In our view, ICT investment, evaluation and prioritisation can only be considered effective where it is based on a vision that has been clearly defined, with key deliverables and outcomes which can be measured.

How are you measuring success?

Dr THURLEY - I guess the measurement of the performance of success against our vision, I reckon it's an interesting challenge. We should be setting what we expect the situation to be in the future, i.e. the target state. For example, if I could use Our Digital Future as the most obvious example to use, how do we know that we've achieved those components? As you know, some of those components are actually quite complex. They're multiple initiatives to hit those measurements. We've been actively tracking Our Digital Future since that's been in play. We're just about to go through the process of refreshing that strategy. In doing so, we've also been able to say that we've hit a range of achievements. It's meeting the outcomes and achievements for each of those areas is how we kind of measure ourselves. Because we're talking about long periods of time here, we've just been trying to capture those achievements and to document them where possible. I think you're sitting on a document there.

CHAIR - Yes. Documenting achievements. I will just go to one here on strategy, under the Government responsibility of the strategy:

Develop digital culture and capability across Government agencies.

How are you doing that and how are you measuring it?

Dr THURLEY - Yes. Through you, Minister, if that's okay: digital capability - one of the parts of the data and digital Committee's work plan was digital capability and workforce uplift. We actually had a number of initiatives that are in that space that were aimed at potentially more so building the skills of some of what I would call technical fluency with our professionals in that space, less so as the workforce in general, which is still a challenge and there's been massive inroads there anyway.

The work that we've done there is about bringing capable people through, understanding their skills and knowing how to map those skills and address any of the gaps. Recent work we've done, it's hooked into the skills framework for the information age, which I am not sure if you're aware of, but it's an international standard for identifying skills and capabilities within the ICT domain, or, actually, digital domain. We've been actively working through those skills and mapping them to roles and then trying to find out where our gaps are to try and build out that, and initiate capability and uplift in that space.

CHAIR - I will go back to the question: how are you going to measure that you've actually achieved the intent?

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Dr THURLEY - Ultimately, we will be able to say that we can measure and map individuals against those skills in this instance. We can map those individuals against those skills and say that they've achieved those skills.

CHAIR - They will be assessed in some way?

Dr THURLEY - Yes, there is assessment. I put my emphasis on this: this is early stages, and it's not done in every domain of ICT yet.

CHAIR - Clearly, if people are digitally literate and smart, they're less likely to breach some IT-important protocol and bring down a whole system or something, or at least even not being hacked or clicking on a link that you really shouldn't have done.

Ms KELLY - Through you, Minister: an example of that might be Cyber Awareness Month, which is held in October every year, and because DSS has responsibility for whole-of-Government cyber, they work really closely with the agencies to deliver training programs during that month. It's not to say that that's the only time they do it, but for example, in our department, Department Premier and Cabinet, we also have ongoing cyber programs where, for example, we have those phishing exercises, so we might get an email out of the blue that looks okay but we're able to assess behind if employees click on certain links and don't mark it as phishing -

CHAIR - So you do a little test.

Ms KELLY - Yes, we do little tests quite regularly throughout the year. There are different opportunities particularly around security to provide training, but also to assess people's uptake of that as well.

CHAIR - Going back to Our Digital Future, you've got the number of major actions in there across community, economy and Government. These are the things that you will be working to prepare performance measures against, or what? Again, I will go back to the outcomes focus here.

Dr THURLEY - Yes. The question is - we get to say is - have we met the outcomes of that particular action? We're often measuring it in terms of, in the first instance, did we execute something was going to make a difference, and then how do we know if that made a difference? I guess we look at things like are we - I'm trying to think of a good example in that group. For example, I think uplifting cybersecurity was one of the original actions in Our Digital Future.

We have effectively ran through in the way we would - it's not just to put one measure on things, but have we increased our capabilities in that space and how do we do that? We've had independent reports to say this is where we've got to, this is how we've - how much we've increased our maturity. This is what systems with level capabilities we've left in place so we know that we're actually starting to tick the boxes of that uplift. It's a very broad-level action that would have multiple performance capabilities in it.

CHAIR - How do you report your progress on these, and when you believe that you've - something can be achieved by delivering a thing.

PUBLIC

Dr THURLEY - Yes, I know what you mean.

CHAIR - Some of them aren't all your responsibility - improved telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in rural and regional Tasmania. I look forward to that in my electorate, I can tell you, but that's not entirely the Government's responsibility. Some of it sits with other entities. Strengthen opportunities for lifelong digital skills learning: that will be an ongoing thing. I'm interested in how you do that.

Dr THURLEY - Through you, Minister: I will just emphasise the nature of the Our Digital Future being a broad level, economy-level strategy that looks at the role of all the players or stakeholders, including Government's role, the community's role and industry's role. Therefore, you're right, it's an ongoing component that you would expect all parties to be engaged in and what sort of engagement we have in getting initiatives on the table and out the door to deliver any sort of change in that digital inclusion space which we have started to move into. It's been a challenge for Tasmania, as has been documented, but we have run a range of activities and at the individual initiative level we would have reports that suggest this is the improvement, or this didn't work and this is the learning we got from it.

CHAIR - You have engaged with the Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) on this, obviously?

Dr THURLEY - Just about every agency had something happening in that space, but DECYP was the largest area. Also, State Growth ran the Digital Ready for Daily Life. There's a range of programs all being delivered across the Government in different spaces.

CHAIR - In terms of reporting against this, how do you report against it?

Dr THURLEY - We're reporting against this through the tracking that I described. Did I put the tracking report in?

Mr WINTER - Do you report to, like, the agency secretaries or the Minister or -

Dr THURLEY - There has not been any directs on how that's going, because what we would say would be more reporting on the Government's actions that come out of it. For example, if it was an action that Government was specifically doing, like cyber uplift, I will just use that as an example, then we'd be definitely reporting through the governance about how we're achieving our outcomes for that project and that program which we have. The end-of-project report says what benefits were achieved, what outcomes we have and what learnings we had.

CHAIR - It's attachment 8. Is this information available publicly or do you report this in your annual report, for example?

Dr THURLEY - No. We haven't put that publicly, but it has been the intent that we provide that highlights report as an example.

CHAIR - In your annual report?

Dr THURLEY - Yes.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Other questions on Recommendation 2? We've ranged across them a little bit. If we go to Recommendation 3 - this was with regard to the review of the terms of reference to the Digital Services Board. They provide a copy of the new terms of reference. Minister, do you want to speak any further to that? I'm particularly interested in the reporting of the subcommittee, how that goes. I believe that was covered a bit previously by the CIO.

Ms OGILVIE - I will just make a couple of quick comments, if I could. It's been really interesting to listen to the dialogue across the table. I would also just like to share my understanding that as a Government, the digital and data skills and the capacity we have to help lift the workforce and digital inclusion and those elements, we take that very seriously as well. We are a large employer of digital and technology people and we see that quite a porous workflow of people has quite often spent time in Government so we do take very seriously our obligation to make sure that people's skills are developed. I'd like to get that on the record.

In relation to the data and digital subcommittee, I would like to get onto the record for you the endorsed role, what its role is, and that is to oversee whole-of-Government digital initiatives. We've heard some great discussion around what some of those initiatives are and how it's been an improvement to what had been occurring before. It monitors progress in the delivery of significant Government digital priorities, including that Our Digital Future Strategy. This one, I think, is really important to lead engagement and collaboration across Government agencies. We are very fortunate in Tasmania with two degrees of separation that we can work together, but as we see technology even accelerating in its advancement and our ability and our need to implement new systems and models, it is that collaboration that keeps us all on the same page, so I'm very grateful to everybody who's on that Committee and particularly our CIO for the management of that. Then the role of that Committee also is to facilitate the establishment of effective data governance and data-sharing capabilities across Government. I've been around a longish time as well and I see that we've made great strides in not just the integrity of our data, but our ability to utilise that for the benefit of Tasmanians but also to share that as well.

This is obviously a journey. We are an old organisation, being a Government, there's lots of legacy systems and processes, but I think the focus on that is important, moves us towards a digital Government scenario which is really where we want to get to. Then just finally that Committee does report to the Secretary's board on a monthly basis, so it then goes up the line and - sorry Chair, just one thing reflecting on your comments around telecommunications, again, very complex sector and market, federal Government obligations, private sector and also state Government as a customer.

I, as the Digital Minister also sit on the Federal Digital and Data Ministers' meetings and you will be pleased to know I am very much a squeaky wheel in relation to Tasmania getting a fair go when it comes to communications telco. Particularly from the Federal Government perspective and their investment, which I think has been a bit sluggish, but we're keeping the pressure on. Thank you.

CHAIR - Unless there was anything else you wanted to add. You do say you've adopted this in principle but it seems pretty much that you've adopted it, is there an explanation for that?

Ms OGILVIE - I think it's a very in principle adoption. Yes, sorry, Noelene.

PUBLIC

Ms KELLY - I'm not quite sure why it was marked as in-principle because it was adopted in - we've been running since 2022 and it's a really productive group. In terms of reporting to the secretary's board - we do meet monthly, we met this morning for example, for two hours and we actually - and Justin mentioned before there's a standing meeting held every week which is to talk more operational and the idea of the DEC meetings, monthly, is to deal with those strategic issues

Besides providing a report to the Secretaries' board - and the secretaries' board sign off on our annual work plan - besides providing written reports every month there is also the opportunity to go and meet with the secretaries' board and address any questions that they might have either about our papers or about the direction that we're taking.

CHAIR - We can say that one has been accepted?

Ms KELLY - I would say accepted and completed and ongoing -

Ms OGILVIE - I would.

CHAIR - Yeah that's why I thought it was a bit odd, it seemed to comply with the recommendation but -

Dr THURLEY - I can answer why it's like that -

Ms OGILVIE - Trying to under promise and over deliver.

Dr THURLEY - In 2020 when it was on the table, there was the response back from Government and it's in the front matter of the report - was like, 'Oh, we're not sure about what you're asking here, we want to have a think about it and reform it, potentially in a different way,' and the reform is actually very different than what the Auditor asked for, but it's better and it's more modern, and, over the next three years we've just - that's where it's adopted to. We've ended up in a place that's better and fully adopted what he was after in intent.

CHAIR - Yeah that's what I'm saying, just achieved it in a slightly different way.

Dr THURLEY - Yeah, that's right.

CHAIR - We will go to Recommendation four, and this one you have accepted in full. There's a DSB⁵ to review implementation whole-of-Government IT strategy, et cetera. I don't know if there's anything else to add to this. Minister, did you want to add anything further to this? It has been adopted, and some of the other things we've talked about in terms of monitoring or measuring outcomes is relevant across the whole lot - is there anything else you wanted to add?

Ms OGILVIE - I would just very briefly say that I think a power of work has been done and yes, adopted, but it's always a question of how to make sure in adopting recommendations we fit them and the process we adopt is best practice and best process. I think that's really how we've gone about it. A great credit to everybody who did the original work and also the journey to get to this point in time, it's not perfect, but I think we're shaping things up well.

⁵ Digital Services Board

PUBLIC

CHAIR - This is one for you, Minister. We've talked about this in how the board operates and the annual work plan which you provide a copy of the 2025 work plan in the documentation provided: in the current budgetary constraint environment we're in, will the prioritisation of these projects need to be reconsidered, and how will you go about that as the Minister?

Ms OGILVIE - As the Minister, I will always advocate for more and better investment in technology right across Government, but I will note that a number of our projects are not subject to this particular budget cycle, they run across a number of budget cycles.

I think we are a very efficient and effective group. It is, in fact, our CIO who has his finger on the pulse of that. I will say I have not heard of any desire to start cutting projects, I think that would be concerning, but we do have a need, I think, to really make sure that what we're doing from an investment in the IT projects perspective is really well-targeted - and I know we like to talk about the stack - but is addressing the foundational systems work that we need to do right across Government, and allowing space to do innovative and agile things as well. We're starting to see a few of those happen. The reason we can do that is because we have this new governance model in place where we're actually connecting people in a smarter way.

I think that that's my top level response. I wonder, Justin, whether you might just talk more broadly to how prioritisation in decision-making for IT investment generally happens. I think that might be helpful for the Committee.

Dr THURLEY - Through you, Minister. Particularly at the whole-of-Government level - and I won't speak for each agency because their prioritisation will be based on their risks and requirements and opportunities, strategic risks and opportunities, would be the way I'd phrase that - but for the whole-of-Government, we look at where we can make the biggest impacts with the work that we've identified in our work plan, because we often have more than we can do in our work plan, and often our work plan is quite elaborate.

We just went through a process today where we changed it again, to see if we can just focus on things where we can make a difference, and also try and focus on Government's priorities. We try and identify what priorities Government is telling us it has. We then work our way down through what the business priorities are and then into the work that we are doing to make sure that we are aligning with the Government's priorities.

We look at things like cost optimisation, or we're looking at improving a particular digital service's delivery like we did with My Service Tas, or we're looking at improving cybersecurity, and we have a number of projects still in that space. Similarly, the digital workplace and capability - or digital workforce and capabilities - are still something that we'd like to move forward with where we can.

All those different areas that operate in, we try to tie them back to the Government's priorities of the day, and make sure that we are continuously aligned with it. We will review it, make sure it's the thing that we're getting the best bang for our buck out of, and ensure that we are doing the right projects, that they're for the whole of Government. Each inner agency goes through a similar process, and again, I'd say it's more focused on the strategic opportunities and risks.

PUBLIC

Ms KELLY - Through you, Minister, we do that collectively through the data and digital Committee. In developing our work plan that we were finalising today, we spent a couple of meetings last year talking as a Committee about, at a whole-of-Government level, what are the priorities? What are the priorities that are at an agency level as well? We used different tools and things like that to prioritise and work through what was going to be number one through to ten.

We also have different streams of work. Some of the work that we do, some of the initiatives we might have on our work plan, are things that we're going to oversee that we've got an interest in, but we're not necessarily doing the work, it lives with a particular agency or business area. There are some things on our work plan that we're going to investigate.

An example of that which ties into one of the first questions we were talking through is, is it beneficial to Government to have one desktop platform, so everyone has one device or a variety of the device, across the whole of the state service? Therefore, do you then have one IT help desk and desktop support team to manage that across Government? We're doing some work - and actually, DECYP are leading that work at the moment, around looking at the costs and the benefits of that so that we can then, depending on what we find, put up a proposal through to the Secretaries to say, look, we think there's something here. We think there's cost benefits to Government, we think there's efficiency benefits - would you like us to proceed?

The work plan will be made up of different categories of activities that the DDC have responsibility for and some of them are enduring as well, so they will span across multiple years. There are very few things that we put in our work plan that begin in January and then in December; usually they last through multiple years.

Mr JAENSCH - Surely there are organisations bigger than our whole public service that put out a tender to say 'set us up with our systems' routinely, all over the world. How are we still having to diagnose whether it's a good idea to be having one system or many?

Dr THURLEY - It's a really good question. If it's alright with you, Minister?

Ms KELLY - Absolutely.

Dr THURLEY - It's a really good question because we do that sort of thing already. If you look at the ... function or the IT function on the digital platforms, et cetera, it's actually a complex area. To get one organisation to do all of it would be complicated and highly risky, I suspect. Not to say that it's not possible, and it does happen in big organisations -

Mr JAENSCH - I'm not just necessarily suggesting getting an organisation in to do it, but maybe even being that organisation. Are we still working out if that's a good idea or not, to have a single integrated system?

Dr THURLEY - Through you, Minister, I think we kind of are still working that out because of the nature of the autonomy and risk that you have within the way the Government is structured. If you wanted to just run it all out of a central agency, or a central entity, then it's absolutely possible, and that is done elsewhere. You'd have to look at the economics of it and we would have to look at that to see where it is.

PUBLIC

With that also comes that some the concentration of centralisation versus decentralisation - there's some really good literature and understanding of what the impacts would be. If we're purely about cost optimisation, then that might be still the best way forward, but if we do need the autonomy to move things around, then we'd probably look at some sort of hybrid version of it, which is what most companies do.

Sorry, we've just realised we've lost the Minister.

CHAIR - Minister may have had to disappear. We will move on. She has the link, she can join back in if she needs to but we will rely on you two. We will move on to Recommendation 5. We've got a couple more to go and we do need to wrap it up.

With Recommendation 5, and this, again, is one accepted in principle. I just note that the implementation progress has, since finalisation of the ICT strategy, critical systems and investment audit report agency progressed with renewal and replacement of considerable number of ICT systems and assets through various programs and plans, and that's outlined in the budget papers from 2020-21 to the more recent budgets. You've provided some information, as you did previously, about some of the agencies that have done a lot of this work. Why is this one accepted in principle and what different alternative approaches have you taken?

Dr THURLEY - Again, I think the main reason this one was accepted in principle was the interconnectedness it has to recommendations 1 through to 3, and for the same reasons, the auditor's report was very specific about how it wanted ICT planning to happen. As you know from the front matter that came through, there was very much a different version of that being played out in state Government at the time and also in alignment with events at the time. I think it's more about the fact that we went for a more modern and contemporary approach than perhaps the traditional approach that was put into the report.

CHAIR - The principle, though, is that we have a system that talks to each other, effectively, in short.

Mr JAENSCH - Here's the Minister coming back in.

CHAIR - Here she is. Thank you, Minister. We have just moved on to Recommendation 5 and we've had a brief discussion about it. Is there anything you wish to add on Recommendation 5? We have talked about certain things already.

Ms OGILVIE - We have, and it's obviously a very good discussion. One thing I wouldn't mind sharing with the Committee - again, it's in relation to how we work as Government. Obviously, the conversation we're having today across all of these recommendations is our internal organisation and management of projects, but there are other projects that we do that touch external parties, particularly around digital inclusion and various other projects as well. I just see that there is a general good in the work that we do with these initiatives and projects that then bleeds out into the public space, as a good Government should as well. I just thought I'd touch on that, because I don't think we've touched on that point. So, we do digital inclusion, digital work education internally, but that forms the basis of some work that we are able to do in the social sector, in the community sector as well.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you, Minister. Clearly, there is collaborating. It's not like you don't collaborate, or that the agencies don't collaborate. Look at the whole-of-Government radio network. That took a long time, too. Anyway, it has been delivered.

Ms OGILVIE - A great result. Yes, you're welcome. It's good. It's working well.

CHAIR - You have provided a lot of examples of that in your response to the Committee. Unless anyone else has any other questions on that, we might go to Recommendation 6. You talked about this earlier, Minister, I think in your opening comment, to revisit the feedback approach to the SIIRP submissions to better inform agencies on areas for improvement on future SIIRP submissions. You say you've accepted that in principle, and you've talked about how you've changed some of that. How are you measuring the outcomes of this? Has it made a difference?

Ms OGILVIE - I might actually ask our CIO to respond to that one, because I know he's on the frontline with that, and then if you want me to make another contribution after that, I'm happy to.

Dr THURLEY - I'm happy to talk about that. SIIRP was a process that in the day, particularly around 2020, wasn't well understood by the agencies in terms of how they could use it to build out their projects. In particular, it derisks projects. For example, if someone comes in and asks for a big sum of money and then works out they can't deliver it or it's not right or I need more money - those sorts of things - trying to avoid that. Spending more time on the investment analysis and getting the options right to a level that Treasury can be satisfied that there has been some robust analysis done.

A lot of work has gone on since then. Education, the uplift in our understanding and approach to how we get business cases done, how we do investment analysis for IT projects - there's a lot of work that's gone on and maturity that's occurred around if I want to get -

CHAIR - How's that work been done? What have you done to achieve that?

Dr THURLEY - I think it's probably been more organic in the culture buildout, from 2020 through to now. We've hit the ground running with COVID. A lot changed in terms of how IT is perceived and the profile that it had. A lot of the time we were running with these projects that looked a little bit risky and a little bit uncertain. How do we then cover off on how we build good cases and good understandings of our projects, and also the ability to back out of a project when it's not going to work? This is where, I think, everybody's understanding, the maturity in the industry, the maturity in Government about understanding how to do investment for ICT, has really changed in those five years. Now, if I want to replace the motor registry system, for example, I would have to do a fairly robust business case to say, why should Government spend x millions of dollars, and be able to show that business case is being developed appropriately with some accurate and defensible numbers.

CHAIR - That's operation normal now?

Dr THURLEY - Yes, I think it is. I'm not thinking about getting an ICT project through Treasury or anything like that, that doesn't meet a very high standard of understanding what the risks are.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - You say that the supporting evidence - you just talked about it but didn't actually provide actual evidence - increase the number of successful SIIRP proposals. Have you got a metric on that?

Dr THURLEY - Yes. Which projects were born out of SIIRP would be the way I'd do that. If you were going to say how many projects it would be, it would be less than a dozen over the years in ICT. There's lots of other projects we go through, but we do know that from 2020 when there was none, we've had several that have gone through that process. Particular ones would be the Digital Health Transformation that started in that space, and Justice Connect, I believe, started in that place. We've also had other projects that have gone through SIIRP that may not have actually resulted in investments, which I won't go into.

CHAIR - Yes, which is the purpose of the process.

Dr THURLEY - Yes, correct, successful.

Ms KELLY - It also gives the opportunity to highlight to Treasury through the SIIRP process those systems that are potentially at risk as well, so rather than an agency necessarily just putting in a bid through to the annual budget submission process, there's that opportunity to build that case about why it's a risk and the consequences of not investing, so it can provide a parallel pathway.

CHAIR - Recommendation 7 is about the up-to-date ICT critical asset registers. Have all agencies now got them?

Dr THURLEY - Up-to-date ICT asset registers? Yes, to my knowledge. You know, I'm not going to pull one out and say it's up to date as of today, but yes.

CHAIR - Unless there's any pressing matters you want to raise, Minister, we will wrap it up.

Ms OGILVIE - No. I'd just like to thank you all for your interest. It is an area, of course, that I have a lot of personal passion about. I loved the opportunity to come and talk.

My reflection is we've come a long way since that report, and I'd like to thank the department for the work that they're doing. It's obviously an iterative process and turning legacy systems and processes into a modern Government digital system is challenging, but I think we're up to the challenge, given budgetary constraints as well. There's lots of really interesting things happening and I think our workforce is quite sophisticated and digitally switched on and we intend to invest time and energy in making sure we maintain that - and of course, we're interested in the broader Tasmanian perspective as well.

CHAIR - Thanks, Minister, for your time, and we will let you go.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you so much, everybody.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee suspended from 2:44 pm to 2:48 pm.