

Police Information System Replacement Project

Auditor-General's Report
to the Legislative Assembly
No 6: 2025-26



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We pay our respects to their cultures,
and to their Elders past and present.





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The Speaker
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Auditor-General's Report to the Legislative Assembly No. 6 of 2025-26

In accordance with section 24 of the *Audit Act 1995*, I submit my report on the results of a review into the Serve and Protect (SerPro) project to replace the Police Realtime Online Management Information System (PROMIS) for the Northern Territory Police Force by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development.

Jara K Dean
Auditor-General

26 November 2025



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Legislative Assembly

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Police Information
System
Replacement Project

Preface

This report contains the finding from my review into the Serve and Protect (SerPro) project that was initiated to replace the Police Realtime Online Management Information System (PROMIS) for the Northern Territory Police Force by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development.

It has taken more than 5 years and over \$60 million to replace the system that had supported policing in the Northern Territory since 1999. It is important to understand from the outset that this was not a like-for-like replacement. The new system is an integrated solution capable of accessing and exchanging information across a multitude of other systems.

The project, as documented at conclusion, did not meet all of the objectives outlined in the business case approved by Cabinet. As a result, further work had to be completed after the project closure to address the known issues. In fact, work on the system to address functional deficiencies is continuing, with the cost borne out of the operational budget of the Northern Territory Police Force.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic and a coronial investigation impacted the cost and timing of the project. However, these were not the only contributing factors as to why the project was not delivered on time and on budget.

This report highlights the value of strong project governance supported by relevant, reliable, accurate and timely reporting. I hope that my review of the project offers learnings about what can occur when governance is weak and issues go unreported or are miscategorised. My recommendations focus on improving the management of future IT projects.

I would like to express gratitude to all who have provided information and assistance to complete this review.

Jara K Dean
Auditor-General

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AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OVERVIEW

Summary of the Review

Introduction

Government departments and agencies depend on information and communication technology (ICT) systems to manage information and deliver public services. ICT projects vary in complexity and replacing outdated systems with new solutions can be costly, prolonged and carries significant risks.

The Police Realtime Online Management Information System (PROMIS) was the primary information and case management system for the Northern Territory Police Force (NTPF) for over two decades. The system was ageing and became progressively unstable and difficult to support. The need to replace PROMIS was first identified in 2016 after the system experienced a major outage.

A business case to replace PROMIS with a commercial off-the-shelf product was approved by Cabinet in 2018. A public tender concluded in June that year and resulted in the selection of a product named SerPro (Serve and Protect).

SerPro went live on 27 November 2023, however not all integrations were operational at that time and the final cost significantly exceeded the budget. Post go live, additional investment is continuing to provide further enhancements due to changing business and legislative requirements.

Background

PROMIS was the primary case management system used by the NTPF for recording investigations and operational information since it was introduced in May 1999. The system was developed by the Australian Federal Police.

PROMIS was supported in-house by NTPF's information technology team with support from external contractors. The database that supported PROMIS was hosted and managed by Data Centre Services, a government business division within the Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD).

The NTPF ceased upgrades to PROMIS in 2009 and in May 2016 the system experienced an outage which lasted several days and disrupted police operations across the Northern Territory. An assessment of PROMIS determined that it was at risk of another critical failure which would pose a significant threat to policing and justice in the Northern Territory.

The 2015-16 Budget allocated \$1.0 million to develop the functional and technical requirements for the replacement of PROMIS. The 2016-17 Budget provided a commitment of \$2.9 million over three years to remove components of PROMIS to provide for required capability enhancements of those components and simplify the replacement.

The 2017-18 Budget allocated \$45 million over four years for the implementation of a new police management system.

A business case to replace PROMIS with a commercial off-the-shelf product was approved by Cabinet in 2018. The other options considered was to custom build a system that would meet NTPF's requirements.

A public request for tender concluded in June 2018 and resulted in the selection of a system used in other jurisdictions. The system was named SerPro.

The business case estimated the cost of the involvement of sworn officers during implementation to be \$8.1 million and the ongoing cost once the system was in place to be \$0.8 million per annum. These costs were to be met by NTPF from its operational budget and were not included in the project cost.

The business case also estimated the ongoing cost to maintain the new system to be \$5.3 million per annum.

The project included the replacement of functions within the Integrated Justice Information System (IJIS) and replaced the use of the emergency management tool, WebEOC for custody management. The Information Reports system used to capture intelligence was also replaced. In addition, a fully electronic brief management process from case file creation through to court proceedings and disclosure was also be introduced.

When SerPro went live on 27 November 2023, not all functions were implemented, with some integrations included in the subsequent stabilisation project.

Objective of the review

The objective of the review was to conduct a post implementation review of the SerPro project and to answer these questions:

1. Was the SerPro project managed to be delivered on time and on budget?
2. Were the benefits of the SerPro project met?

Terminology

Terms "project" and "program" have specific meanings in project management. The term "program" is used to describe a series of activities or "projects" that, together achieve the desired outcomes.

The following activities are examples of distinct projects within the SerPro Program: integration with other systems; data migration; training of users; or redesign of business practices etc.

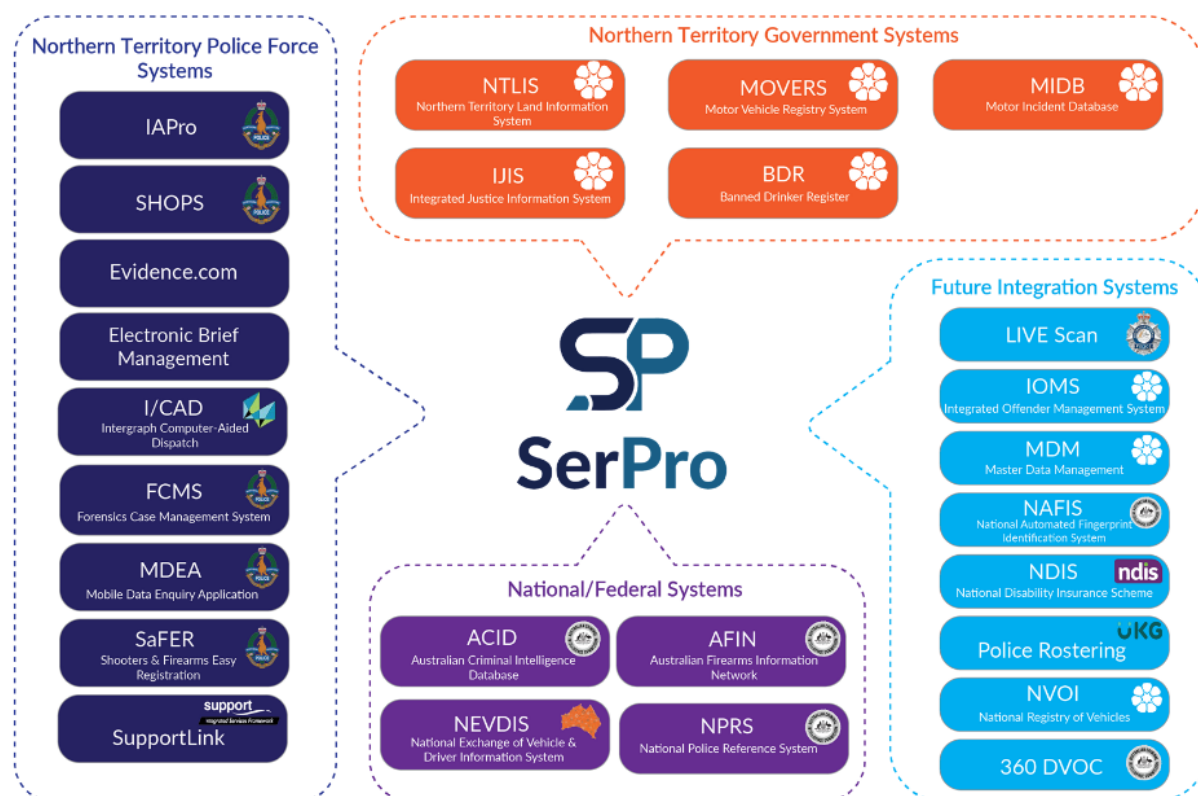
For simplicity, this report uses the term "project" to describe the core activities, both business and technical in nature.

The context

SerPro was not a like-for-like replacement. PROMIS was a desktop application reliant on an old technology platform with limited transfer of information to other systems.

SerPro, on the other hand is an integrated and mobile system (although its mobility is currently restricted to laptops only because of the mobile devices used by the Northern Territory Government) able to connect and transmit data between NTPF, Northern Territory Government and national systems as shown in *Figure 1*. It also replaced several functions within IJIS and NTPF's own Information Reports database.

Figure 1: SerPro components



Source: Derived from SerPro Management documentation

SerPro is used by approximately 1 600 police officers and 200 civilian staff across 69 police stations and posts. There were over 240 face-to-face training sessions delivered across multiple locations.

The implementation of SerPro also required the deployment of hardware devices and software installation at locations across the Northern Territory. It also required NTPF to review, update or develop corporate documents for changes to process gave NTPF an opportunity to align and improve its business practices.

How we conducted the review

The review was originally scheduled to be conducted in the first half of 2023 but was later deferred. It was returned to the program 18 months later and scheduled to be undertaken in the second half of 2024.

The fieldwork was completed during October and November 2024 and therefore, unless indicated otherwise, information in the report is current as at that date. Audit staff changes following the completion of the fieldwork and changing priorities impacted the overall completion of this review.

What did we observe?

Over the duration of the SerPro project from initiation through to project closure, the original go-live date set for December 2021 was postponed multiple times, culminating in a total delay to the originally planned timeframe of 23 months to November 2023, and at an unaudited cost in excess of \$60 million which was well over the initial Cabinet-approved funding allocation.

As documented at project close in September 2024 and assessed during this review in November 2024, the SerPro project fully met four and partially met five of the nine assessed objectives, with one objective not assessed by the review outlined in the business case approved by Cabinet.

Prior to a May 2022 review, we found that DCDD's internal supervision, project controls and governance, and risk frameworks were not fully effective or of sufficient maturity to identify and mitigate risks associated within the project, including where concerns were escalated by project staff. This resulted in the realisation of critical issues which impacted the project's schedule and critical path, affected core system design and delivery, and directly contributed to the substantial overspend.

However, post the review, DCDD acted decisively, and appropriately once critical issues were identified with the project.

The variation between budgeted cost to actual cost was predominantly attributed to the significant delay experienced by the project, with most of the excess expenditure realised as unplanned time and materials payments to contractor staff over the increased timeframe. The project's financial deficit was further exacerbated through the appointment of additional personnel, over and above originally forecast levels, to remediate the project.

The responsibility for addressing unrealised objectives, technical issues, improving functionality, and for meeting ongoing operational requirements, including modifications resulting from legislative changes transitioned to NTPF.

Despite issues with the planning and delivery, and controls of the SerPro project, NTPF personnel, both executive and frontline officers, reported that the SerPro system has improved their primary information and case management capabilities.

Overall, the project delivered a modern, integrated system which supports NT Police's core functions.

Recommendations

We have made the following recommendations to the Department of Corporate and Digital Development as the agency responsible for delivering information and communications technology projects and accountable for the projects' budget, projects management and delivery, performance reporting and procurement.

Number	Recommendation
1	The membership of governance committees should include appropriately qualified and experienced resources who should independently and objectively challenge decisions and overall enhance project oversight.
2	Following up on the previous recommendation, DCDD should consider the benefit of peer reviews, where people experienced in project management but outside the project management team are asked to evaluate the project.
3	DCDD should develop a project assurance framework that would apply to all major ICT projects or programs or at least update the <i>Digital Project Management Framework</i> accordingly. Consideration should be given whether assurance reviews are mandatory, at what stages of project assurance reviews should be undertaken and trigger points that would initiate ad hoc assurance reviews. Any references to audits and reviews by the Auditor-General under the Project assurance reviews section in the Digital Project Management Framework should be amended to explain the limitations of the Auditor-General's mandate or removed altogether.
4	DCDD should implement a process where a formal approval from the original decision maker must be sought for material variances to project budget or when the project budget is exceeded by a predetermined limit in any one financial year.
5	The cost estimates used in evaluating different options and whether or not to proceed with a project should identify the total cost of ownership, not just the project implementation costs. The total cost of ownership generally includes the cost to implement, operate, support and maintain an application, including hardware and software acquisition or development, management and support and communications costs. The total cost of ownership should include costs incurred by all agencies involved in the project.
6	As the department responsible for implementing major ICT solutions across government, DCDD should develop a reporting mechanism that provides relevant project status information on major capital projects, full planned and actual costs, timelines, governance arrangements, and the extent to which benefits are realised.
7	Financial management responsibilities should be clearly defined in project management documentation and aligned with the overarching framework and delegations.
8	DCDD should evaluate subsequent expenditure to determine if it meets the asset recognition criteria and therefore should be capitalised.
9	Project reporting should be reviewed to ensure effective project control.

Number	Recommendation
10	Project reporting should track how tasks, resources, and timelines are contributing to meeting project objectives, such as aligning reports with the project's strategic purpose and continuously monitoring performance data to ensure objectives are met.

Comments and submissions

A draft report was provided to the Department of Corporate and Digital Development for comments on 11 November 2025 in accordance with section 24(a) of the *Audit Act 1995*. A draft report was also provided to the Northern Territory Police Force to ensure procedural fairness.

Response from the Department of Corporate and Digital Development

Section 24(4)(b) of the Audit Act requires the Auditor-General to include in reports to the Legislative Assembly and supplementary reports any submissions or comments received.

The submission received from the Department of Corporate and Digital Development is included below.

DCDD acknowledges the observations from the review of the Serpro project by the Auditor-General on realisation of benefits, time and budget.

The review outlined that the project delivered a modern integrated system which supports NT Police core operations through improved reporting capabilities, strengthened internal monitoring, compliance, and increased transparency for external reporting.

The recommendations in the review are noted and work has commenced to incorporate these where practical in a project assurance framework and project management practices. Recommendations address enhanced independent assurance and review mechanisms, robust reporting (covering inception and post project costs), and strengthened governance.

The Auditor-General recognises that DCDD acted decisively and appropriately post the May 2022 Project Assurance Review to address the issues that had impacted the projects schedule, costs and delivery outcomes.

At the time of the review in November 2024, the Auditor-General concluded that, of the ten objectives approved in 2018 business case, 4 were fully met, 5 partially met and 1 was not assessed in the review. While functional mapping for enhanced national information exchange is in place, it is reliant on timeframes with the Commonwealth which are outside the control of the Serpro project. Now, 12 months later, DCDD would assess all ten objectives have been fully met within the Territory's direct control.

Catherine Weber
Chief Executive Officer
26 November 2025

Was the project managed to be delivered on time and on budget?

Sound project management processes ensure a higher likelihood that a project will be completed on time, within budget, to an acceptable level of quality, and will have achieved its objectives.

There are multiple reasons why projects fail or do not achieve the intended benefits. On every project, there is an intrinsic relationship between the project's budget, timeline and scope that impact the final deliverables. Exceeding the acceptable budget, missing deadlines, or not meeting scope requirements signifies a project failure.

Poor project management processes are commonly cited amongst the main reasons for project failures, together with inadequate governance, lack of independent project management quality assurance and so on.

Project governance

The project was managed by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD) on behalf of the Northern Territory Police Force (NTPF). DCDD's project management framework is based on a project management methodology commonly used in both Australia and internationally.

Under the project management framework, DCDD was accountable for the project budget, project management and delivery, performance reporting and procurement.

Project governance included oversight forums such as the Implementation Committee and the Steering Committee, which were convened regularly with DCDD, NTPF, Attorney-General's Department and Department of Treasury and Finance representatives.

The project was also overseen by the ICT Governance Board, which is charged with overseeing major ICT projects across the NTG. Members of the ICT Governance Board are appointed by the responsible minister and include senior executive representatives from DCDD, the Departments of Treasury and Finance and the Chief Minister and Cabinet.

A comprehensive Program Management Plan was approved by the Steering Committee in January 2019 to serve as a base against which the various groups could monitor progress, risks, issues and overall management. The Program Management Plan was developed in line with the DCDD's Project Management Framework.

Steering committee

The Program Management Plan defined the steering committee's roles as to provide oversight, recommendations regarding critical decisions and advice to the program customer (Deputy Commissioner of Police) and program sponsor (Chief Executive of DCDD). The Steering Committee's primary objective is to ensure the successful delivery of the project.

The creation of a steering committee only adds value if the committee has an adequate composition and responsibilities.

We found that members of the steering committee had a direct stake in the project. Project governance was not separate from organisational governance, with steering committee membership based on individual members' roles within DCDD and NTPF, rather than the required skills and experience. The steering committee lacked appropriate skilled members who could independently and objectively monitor performance and challenge decisions being made.

It was unclear whether, or how effectively, the steering committee challenged the information provided and decisions made. There was no evidence that members of the steering committee questioned the information presented or requested an independent review of the project and its progress. Meeting minutes often provided only a summary of the documents considered and recorded outcomes.

1

The membership of governance committees should include appropriately qualified and experienced resources who should independently and objectively challenge decisions and overall enhance project oversight.

There were over 150 documents or different versions of documents recorded on the project's documents register from the early stages of the project. Despite this, project documentation, including high-level project initiation and project management plans, were found to be out of date, not being updated regularly in accordance with internal processes and key plans required for the next stages of delivery were not completed on time.

An assurance review conducted in September 2022 highlighted the risk of limited documentation available considering significant turnover of NTPF subject matter staff at that time.

In the early stages of the project, we found insufficient oversight and project governance during several stages of the project, including deviations from better practice that would have otherwise prompted ongoing alignment of the project against its business case objectives.

The deficient project governance finding is supported by the following examples:

- descopeing and rescoping of project objectives, sometimes without the formally documented approval of relevant governance forums, committees, or stakeholders
- reports demonstrating previously unreported or miscategorised issues in key functional areas of the project and platform build
- the role, deliverables and expected time commitment of subject matter experts were not always able to be accommodated due to resource constraints. Some staff were reassigned due to COVID-19 and other operational pressures

- budget overspends with limited evidence of appropriate control. The justification for cost variations became progressively limited as the project advanced. Meeting records documenting budget variations did not include the rationale for the increases, only that a decision was made or the source of additional funding
- appointment of a Senior Program Manager to replace Program Manager from the leadership role, following the identification of critical issues with the project
- a change manager was replaced by a training manager approximately 12 months into the project, with that role later reinstated in October 2022 prior to the realised go-live date. The importance of having a robust and structured approach to change management was recognised at the outset and detail change planning was to take place.

The training delivery was restructured from an online training module post the May 2022 to a face-to-face model at additional costs and paid for from the project budget. It is commendable that DCDD and the revised SerPro project team adapted the change management strategy to roll out face-to-face training across the Territory, despite earlier NT Police sponsor sign-off on online-only end user training. The success of the rollout and resulting end-user satisfaction, notwithstanding identified issues with the system itself, can be attributed to this change in delivery.

We would expect from DCDD to understand the unique operating conditions of their client and to fully articulate the impacts of the initial decision to roll out online training as part of the specialist guidance and advice provided clients. The online strategy was discussed and agreed with the governance committees and was required at the time due to COVID-19 restrictions.

When critical delivery issues became apparent during the review in May 2022, DCDD restructured and expanded the project management team by replacing the training manager with an experienced change manager with policing business experience, and a specialist police officer from South Australia who had expert knowledge in policing and the SerPro application.

A new Project Director was appointed October 2022 to oversee the project. A number of status reports indicating that the project was likely to exceed both the schedule and budget were produced after that and presented to the steering committee, denoting the shift in governance oversight and redress of the project management failures.

These “red” project status reports revealed previously unreported or miscategorised issues in key business areas such as business process alignment to new SerPro workflows, change management, re-alignment of training materials and schedule.

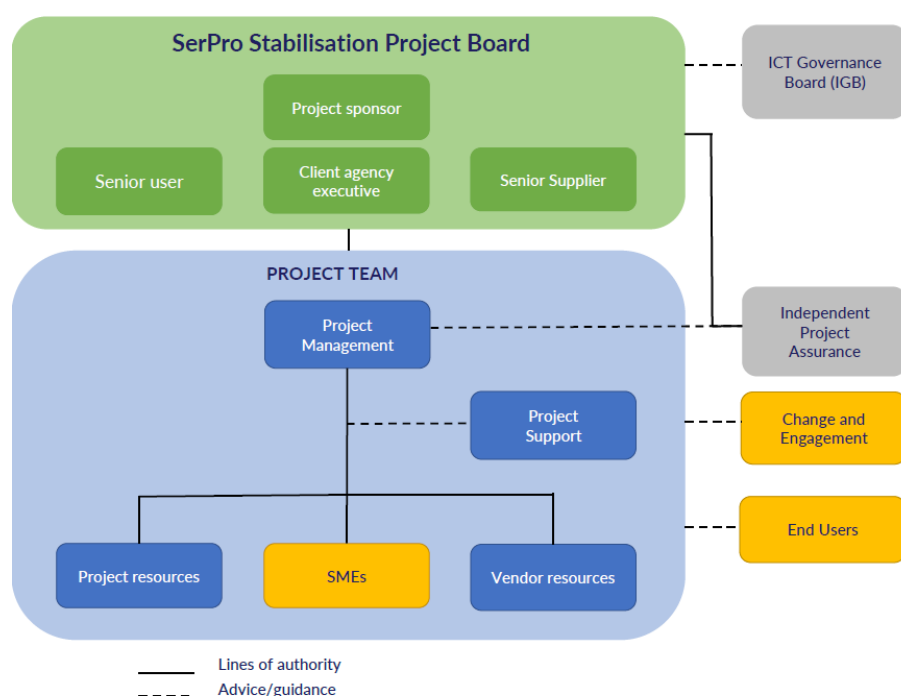
It was noted in interviews, that prior to August 2022 the project had previously not mapped existing business processes and workflows as part of its early business analysis. This practice is not consistent with conventional project business analysis due to the inherent risks it creates downstream for transition and change management planning. Despite this, the project did not document this decision as a risk to change management, go-live, or end user training.

2

Following up on the previous recommendation, DCDD should consider the benefit of peer reviews, where people experienced in project management but outside the project management team are asked to evaluate the project.

The SerPro Stabilisation Project Board was established in July 2024 to provide project governance and oversight over the remaining activities after SerPro went live in November 2023.

Figure 2: Project governance structure post July 2024



Source: Derived from SerPro Management documentation

We noted a visible difference in the documentation of the stabilisation board meeting discussions compared to the previous steering committee. Meeting records showed that members discussed agenda items, questioned the information presented to them and when appropriated raised concerns and proposed options. It appeared that the level of buy-in has increased.

Project assurance

The role of project assurance is to aid project oversight by providing an independent assessment of project risks and delivery confidence. Project assurance is not an audit as its main focus is on areas of improvement and support through recommendations and action plans.

Program or project assurance reviews are not mandated in the Project Management Framework.

An independent assurance review was conducted in June 2019 for the ICT Governance Board. The review recommended that the business case be realigned with the implementation approach and project schedule and highlighted the need for both DCDD and NTPF to identify and agree on the approach for embedding SerPro into NTPF operations.

Between June 2019 to May 2022, there was no independent review of the project that has, or would have, otherwise alerted to issues with the build quality of the SerPro platform and associated risks to project delivery timeframes and budget.

The Northern Territory Auditor-General's Office reviewed the management of the project in 2020. That review found that the business case for the project was reasonable and was periodically reviewed and updated to assess the business case viability. The review accepted that there was a defined cost model or approach in place to forecast project resources and to measure project progress against the defined budget as well as a process to manage, monitor and report scope changes.

At that time, the revised costing was \$9.3 million or 21% higher than the original budget of \$45.0 million. Apart from the increased costing, the review did not identify any matters of concern.

The Auditor-General in the Northern Territory does not have the mandate to undertake performance audits. The mandate extends only to the existence of systems and their capability to enable an agency to assess whether its objectives are being achieved economically, efficiently and effectively. In another words, the review undertaken by the Auditor-General found that the systems and processes, one would expect to be in place for a project of this complexity and size, were in place. However, the review did not address the performance of those systems and processes.

An ad hoc project assurance review was undertaken during April 2022 and completed the following month. The review made 20 recommendations and highlighted the need to confirm and agree, in consultation with the NTPF the scope for go live and a roadmap to sequence the implementation of remaining functionality, including mobility, to occur after the initial implementation of SerPro.

Following the May 2022 review, DCDD commenced monthly reviews.

3

DCDD should develop a project assurance framework that would apply to all major ICT projects or programs or at least update the *Digital Project Management Framework* accordingly. Consideration should be given whether assurance reviews are mandatory, at what stages of project assurance reviews should be undertaken and trigger points that would initiate ad hoc assurance reviews.

Any references to audits and reviews by the Auditor-General under the Project assurance reviews section in the Digital Project Management Framework should be amended to explain the limitations of the Auditor-General's mandate or removed altogether.

Another project assurance review was undertaken during September 2022 and completed the following month. The focus of this second review was on business process and business change implementation readiness and identified further risks and issues. Specifically, this review found the project to be in a poor readiness state with significant unplanned work required. The review made a number of recommendations, including to consider increasing the size of the subject matter experts and business analyst teams due to the multiple parallel streams of activity that required their involvement.

Budget

The project was initially allocated \$44.950 million by Cabinet in 2017-18 for delivery over a 4-year period:

Prior to 2019 \$million	2019/20 \$million	2020/21 \$million	2021/22 \$million	Total \$million
\$7.320	\$13.900	\$19.180	\$4.550	\$44.950

The budget included contingency funding of up to 30% for areas of low confidence in cost estimates, such as system build, interface solutions or reporting. The project contingency totalled \$7.140 million or 19% of the total budget.

Over time, the budget was progressively increased to \$55.960 million as follows:

Date	Additional funding	Adjusted budget
July 2022	\$1 million	\$45.960 million
September 2022	\$2 million	\$47.960 million
May 2023	\$2 million	\$49.960 million
July 2023	\$6 million	\$55.960 million

The above increases were funded by reprioritising activities within DCDD's own budget. The reallocation of funds to changing priorities within a department is at the discretion of its chief executive officer, subject to an endorsement by the responsible minister. For example, the \$6 million increase in July 2023 was funded from the Acacia Remediation Fund.

4

DCDD should implement a process where a formal approval from the original decision maker must be sought for material variances to project budget or when the project budget is exceeded by a predetermined limit in any one financial year.

The project managed to keep within the adjusted budget until October 2023, when it was identified that a further increase to the budget was needed to cover additional hours and support required. At the time the project was closed in January 2024, an additional \$4.300 million was spent, bringing the total cost to \$60.260 million.

SerPro stabilisation project

The stabilisation project started in January 2024 and was focused on court interfaces, electronic brief management and additional activities related to banned drinkers register legislative changes.

The 2023-24 budget allocated \$2.680 million for SerPro stabilisation, with \$2.320 million spent in that year and \$0.360 million carried forward.

None of the cost mentioned above includes the cost of NTPF staff, including uniformed officers, involved in the implementation and estimated in the business case to be \$8.100 million nor does it include the cost incurred by the NTPF in resolving technical issues. For example, NTPF spent in excess of \$4.000 million in 2024-25 on SerPro related costs, such as managing business changes, training and support.

The cost estimates used in evaluating different options and whether or not to proceed with a project should identify the total cost of ownership, not just the project implementation costs.

- 5 The total cost of ownership generally includes the cost to implement, operate, support and maintain an application, including hardware and software acquisition or development, management and support and communications costs. The total cost of ownership should include costs incurred by all agencies involved in the project.

Information published in budget papers or DCDD's own annual report were not comprehensive enough to provide a reliable budget and cost history of the project.

- 6 As the department responsible for implementing major ICT solutions across government, DCDD should develop a reporting mechanism that provides relevant project status information on major capital projects, full planned and actual costs, timelines, governance arrangements, and with the client agency the extent to which benefits are realised.

Some deliverables included in the original project scope were deferred to meet the revised implementation date. The delivery of these functionalities at a later date will further increase the project costs and will need to be funded from NTPF's operating budget.

Under the *Digital Project Financial Management Guide*, the responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient funds to run the project and approving project budget variations rests with Business Owner. The SerPro Program Management Plan assigns accountability for the budget to the Program Sponsor (Chief Executive of DCDD).

7

Financial management responsibilities should be clearly defined in project management documentation and aligned with the overarching framework.

Accounting for software

Computer software is treated as an intangible asset. An intangible asset is measured initially at cost, which comprises its purchase price and any directly attributable cost of preparing the asset for its intended use. SerPro is an example of an internally developed software, where off-the-shelf product had to be significantly configured for internal use. Therefore, the cost of activities that related to design, construction, build and testing prior to the software asset being available for use were capitalised.

SerPro was recognised as an intangible asset on the balance sheet of DCDD at the cost of \$45.8 million in 2024-25. The software will be depreciated over its estimated useful life, which was set at 15 years, on a straight-line basis.

The nature of intangible assets is such that, in many cases, there are no additions to such an asset or replacements of part of it. Accordingly, most subsequent expenditures are likely to maintain the expected future economic benefits embodied in the existing asset rather than meet the definition of an intangible asset and the recognition criteria. In addition, it is often difficult to attribute subsequent expenditure directly to a particular intangible asset rather than to the business as a whole.

However, in the case of SerPro, which was delivered as a minimum viable product with known issues and deficiencies to be completed or delivered following the closure of the project, subsequent expenditure incurred, for example as part of the stabilisation project could be of a capital nature.

Furthermore, although the system is recognised as an asset on DCDD's balance sheet, NTPF continues to incur expenditure to further enhance existing or add new functionalities. For example, NTPF's own digital transformation team spent \$4.020 million in 2024-25 on the interfaces for SerPro. Many of these were in relation to changes to legislation, for example changes to BDR.

8

DCDD should evaluate subsequent expenditure to determine if it meets the asset recognition criteria and therefore should be capitalised.

Timeline

SerPro was to be deployed Territory-wide in September 2021, following a limited release 3 months earlier.

The project encountered multiple challenges from its initiation in 2018. These challenges were predominately tied to disruptions from COVID-19 as well as the engagement of the NTPF in the Yuendumu coronial investigation. As a result, delivery timeframes were extended by 14 months to November 2022.

A review in May 2022 identified significant risks and issues with system design and configuration, affecting usability and functionality and requiring resolution before the planned go-live in November.

By August 2022, numerous project status reports reflected numerous issues, some that needed monitoring but were still manageable, others that were critical and needed immediate attention. The identified issues were across several key areas, including business readiness, commercial acceptance, business as usual planning, and implementation. Further risks and issues were identified during a review conducted in September 2022.

The September 2022 review also stated that the adjustment would require a focus on delivering a 'minimum viable set of critical deliverables. The court deliverables were descope to deliver the project by March 2023.

In February 2023, it was conceded that the existing schedule was no longer valid and the steering committee endorsed a new and final go-live date of November 2023. The high priority interfaces were then brought back into scope to deliver to this timeline.

There is no contention that the SerPro project was not delivered against the originally planned timeline for a go-live in September 2021 and was delayed until November 2023.

The methodology on which the DCDD's Project Management Framework is based on includes techniques for controlling a project's progress. Progress control involves measuring actual progress against the performance targets of benefits, time, cost, quality, scope, sustainability, and risk.

Time and cost are often the key metrics tracked, although this happens in isolation. Earned Value Management is a technique to create an integrated project baseline combining scope, schedule, and cost performance by comparing the completed products and the actual cost and time taken against their schedule and cost estimates.

- 9** Project reporting should be reviewed to ensure effective project control.

Conclusion

The drivers for the overspend were:

- delays in delivery caused largely by COVID-19 and the subsequent increased cost of contractors as a result of the extended delivery timeframes.

- the engagement of the NTPF in the Yuendumu coronial investigation which affected consistent access to NTPF subject matter experts due to competing priorities.

DCDD aimed to manage contractor resources to match project demand throughout the pandemic, including offboarding those not fully utilised to other projects. Keeping contractors engaged out of concerns that DCDD would not be able to restart the project in the wake of the pandemic contributed to the resource cost burden on the project.

The project's financial deficit was further exacerbated through the appointment of additional personnel, over and above originally forecast levels, to remediate the project. This was also inescapable once the project realised critical issues with the system build and change management strategy.

Were the benefits of the project realised?

The primary goal for SerPro was to replace the legacy PROMIS system.

Apart from the risk of another system failure, the business case listed other major issues with PROMIS, including:

- poor data quality potentially leading to wrongful arrests, incorrect/failed prosecutions, inaccurate profiling of suspects and loss of confidence in the integrity of the systems
- lack of integration with the Integrated Justice Information System resulting in duplication of data entry, delays in the availability of key information which critically impacts police operations and officer safety. Inefficient, cumbersome and antiquated reporting and recording of incidents, including the custody process, results in on duty police officers spending up to 38% of their duty time performing paperwork before resuming patrol
- cannot be modified to meet NTPF's changing needs (e.g. paperless arrests, mobile applications), provide effective support for frontline policing and accommodate the Territory and Federal Government's evolving legislative requirements
- inability to share information with the Integrated Justice Information System that underpins prosecution, court outcomes, NT Correctional Services, including youth and adult detention, which can result in incomplete offender status and increased safety risks to police officers, clients and the community
- technology issues with the database and operating system software no longer supported. Further, the PROMIS source code is not available
- No ability to integrate emerging technology solutions.

Project objectives

The business case identified ten objectives for the project which centred on improving the capability and efficiency of NTPF's core policing functions as well as addressing the risk of failure of the PROMIS system, lack of integration with IJIS and a raft of other issues.

The referenced objectives were as follows:

Number	Business Objective
OB-01	Modernise and transform policing by providing an integrated system which supports NT Police's core policing functions of incident, custody, investigation, property, prosecution and intelligence.
OB-02	Address the serious issue of inaccurate and duplicate data by linking the COTS product to related justice systems so that data is entered once only and automates data quality checks with other information sources to improve overall data reliability.
OB-03	Improve police officer safety through reliable and timely data.
OB-04	Mitigate the risk of critical system failure by replacing PROMIS.
OB-05	Allow the NT Police to respond more efficiently to legislative change, both nationally and locally.
OB-06	Enhance information sharing across the NT Police and the integrated justice continuum (IJC), with a focus on providing improved access to current and critical information and the exchange of information including electronic prosecution briefs.
OB-07	Increased capacity for interchange of criminal and intelligence information nationally.
OB-08	Improve reporting and business intelligence capability.
OB-09	Provide improved security to systems and access to information.
OB-10	Improve the accountability, transparency and reporting of police business activities to the government and the community.

These objectives were fundamental to the project's success and contingent to its funding appropriation.

The Program Closure Report stated that 'A number of in scope items were flagged to be delivered post Go Live so as to be able to deliver a "minimal viable product" in line with the revised Program timeline.' We found that the objectives were not specifically referenced in the Program Closure Report and have not been readily or systematically tracked or reported on by DCDD.

Measuring and reporting on performance plays a pivotal role in the success of any project. The project management framework used by DCDD recognises that effective reporting is integral to completing projects in a way that adds value rather than just completing it.

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Project reporting should track how tasks, resources, and timelines are contributing to meeting project objectives, such as aligning reports with the project's strategic purpose and continuously monitoring performance data to ensure objectives are met.

Our assessment of whether the objectives were met, partially met or not met altogether is detailed in the following table:

Number	Business objective/Assessment
OB-01	<i>Modernise and transform policing by providing an integrated system which supports NT Police's core policing functions of incident, custody, investigation, property, prosecution and intelligence.</i> We assessed that this objective was met on the grounds that: ▪ the project delivered a modern, integrated system which supports NT Police's core functions ▪ this observation was well supported in interviews with NT Police executives and staff.
OB-02	<i>Address the serious issue of inaccurate and duplicate data by linking the selected product to related justice systems so that data is entered once only and automates data quality checks with other information sources to improve overall data reliability.</i> We assessed that this objective was partially met on the grounds that: ▪ incomplete integrations, duplicate data and data quality remain an issue with the SerPro system ▪ SerPro integrates with a number of NTPF, NTG and national and federal systems ▪ integration with some justice systems, namely IJIS and some NTPF systems was built only partially or deferred altogether to enable SerPro implementation. Several integrations and the corresponding testing activities were not closed and instead added to Post Go Live Considerations Register ▪ the Police Data Quality and Criminal Records teams confirmed a backlog of more than 27,000 matters awaiting updating and ongoing issues with integration between systems. It is noted that a backlog of criminal records existed prior to the implementation of SerPro and is being addressed by the NTPF together with addressing data quality, such as duplicate records ▪ some of the quality issues are due to legacy data transferred from PROMIS ▪ any work to be completed in the stabilisation phase or beyond project closure to address these issues was outside the scope of this audit.

OB-03

Improve police officer safety through reliable and timely data.

We assessed that this objective was partially met on the grounds that:

- while SerPro delivered much improved data capability compared to PROMIS, the objective of police officers having access to reliable and timely data has not been fully achieved
- the vendor has been unable to provide a mobile solution that suits NTPF. A web application that accesses information from SerPro and other systems was available at go live with minor issues corrected shortly after
- the web application provides police officers with the ability to search across a variety of systems, including court information and national data. At the time the system went live, data was updated only once every 24 hours. However, since then the system has been updated to access the data in near real time and there are ongoing enhancements to the application
- SerPro introduced mandatory fields which improve data reliability because, for example a custodial report cannot proceed without completing all mandatory fields
- the lack of reliable and timely data increases the risk that police officers may be acting on out-of-date information, for example a warrant that had been varied, expired or withdrawn. To mitigate this risk, police officers must use other system to access information. For example, police officers must still access both SerPro and IJIS to obtain detailed information on warrants, court orders and other court outcomes. SerPro shows only a summary of core information such as number of warrants
- while there are workarounds in place, these integrity issues between operational systems impact police administrative burden and performance.

OB-04

Mitigate the risk of critical system failure by replacing PROMIS.

We assessed that this objective was met on the grounds that the replacement of PROMIS with SerPro has significantly improved reliability and availability of the police information system and mitigated the risk of critical failure.

OB-05

Allow the NT Police to respond more efficiently to legislative change, both nationally and locally.

We assessed that this objective was met on the grounds that the system has improved overall compliance with legislation including the introduction of workflows that codify standardised policies and processes; however, this has increased the effort required to amend system-based processes to align to legislation.

OB-06

Enhance information sharing across the NT Police and the integrated justice continuum (IJC), with a focus on providing improved access to current and critical information and the exchange of information including electronic prosecution briefs.

We assessed that this objective was partially met on the grounds that:

- an electronic brief management solution that would manage police prosecution activity and be fully integrated with SerPro to reduce reliance on manual processes and paper files was added to the project in 2023. Police Prosecutions Electronic Brief Management (EBM) system was to take 6 months to implement at a cost of approx. \$0.382m and be rolled out concurrently with SerPro. The project steering committee approved adding to project to the scope in July 2023
- the system that provides electronic case files to courts has been in place since October 2023
- the electronic brief management solution was available at go live date and was enhanced during the stabilisation stage so that court outcomes required by Police are being received in SerPro. The electronic brief management solution is now running successfully.

OB-07

Increased capacity for interchange of criminal and intelligence information nationally.

We assessed that this objective was partially met on the grounds that:

- there were over 40 integrations implemented, including the ability to look up information from other systems relating to persons of interest. As at go live date, data was being sent to National Police Reference System (NPRS), a national depository of data, and Australian Criminal Intelligence Database (ACID)
- not all integrations were functional or operating efficiently when the system went live and other integrations were deferred and will require further work
- for example, a project is currently underway to provide intelligence data to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and ACID in two stages by October 2026 and July 2027.

OB-08

Improve reporting and business intelligence capability.

We assessed that this objective was met on the grounds that:

- operational police officers confirmed that the system had provided improved reporting capabilities, both for internal monitoring, compliance and supervision, and for external reporting and transparency purposes.

OB-09

Provide improved security to systems and access to information.

We assessed that this objective was partially met on the grounds that:

- security weaknesses identified by an independent testing were progressively addressed in 2024 and 2025
 - SerPro is not internet facing and operates from the NTPFES domain. The mitigations were accepted for the remaining risks identified prior to the go live date. The one high risk vulnerability was reduced to low through remediation work and there are mitigating controls to manage the remaining vulnerabilities.
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OB-10

Improve the accountability, transparency and reporting of police business activities to the government and the community.

We did not test the reporting functionality of SerPro and therefore are unable to assess the impact of this reporting capability on the accountability and transparency of police business activities to the community and government.

Nevertheless, operational police officers confirmed in interview that the system provides greatly improved reporting capabilities, both for internal monitoring, compliance and supervision, and for external reporting and transparency purposes.

A benefits realisation plan was developed and approved by the steering committee in October 2020. The plan describes how each of the benefits will be achieved, observed/measured, their ownership and indicative timeframes. It also linked the benefits to the ten objectives identified in the business case. It is noted that most of the benefits were to be realised within 6 months after implementation.

For this reason, the responsibility for benefits realisation was handed over to the NTPF in January 2024. The NTPF is now accountable for facilitating the ongoing optimisation of the SerPro system and responsible for administering the benefits realisation process.

Conclusion

It is understandable that a system like SerPro will be undergoing continued enhancements to address, for example new legislative requirements or evolving security threats. However, when SerPro went live, the interfaces were delivered as a minimum viability product, meaning a version with just enough features to be usable. At the time of this review, the SerPro project fully met four and partially met five of the nine assessed defined objectives outlined in the business case.



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