

SARA Key Performance Indicators and Customer Satisfaction Survey Report 2018-2019

May 2020



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Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	4
2.0	Summary of SARA activity.....	5
3.0	SARA’s performance against 2018–19 KPIs	6
3.1	Information requests.....	6
3.2	Further advice	7
3.3	Decision timeframes.....	7
3.4	Post-decision changes – minor change, other change and extension applications	8
3.5	Appeals.....	9
3.6	FastTrack5.....	9
3.7	Urban design trigger.....	9
4.0	Customer Satisfaction Survey results 2018–19	10
4.1	Customer satisfaction KPI results	10
4.2	Other Customer Satisfaction Survey results	11
4.2.1	SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey comments	11
5.0	Continual improvement.....	12

1.0 Introduction

The State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA) was established in July 2013, to deliver a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to the state's assessment of development applications. SARA sits within the Queensland Treasury, Planning Group and has offices located across Queensland.

Since its inception, SARA has become one of the most efficient and effective regulatory assessment entities in Australia. This has been achieved by a strong culture of continual improvement and a range of supporting governance initiatives.

Two key activities that inform SARA's continual improvement are an annual report against a suite of adopted key performance indicators (KPIs) and an annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, covering the various facets of SARA's functions. At the end of the financial year reporting cycle, actual performance against the adopted KPI targets is measured and documented in this annual report.

This process informs ongoing improvement and drives organisational change to deliver efficiency and best practice in the state's development assessment services.

SARA's KPIs for the 2018–2019 financial year focus on the following key areas:

- pre-lodgement processes
- information requests
- overall assessment timeframes
- post-decision assessment timeframes
- FastTrack5 assessment timeframes
- appeals
- customer satisfaction.

The *Planning Act 2016* (the Planning Act) commenced on 3 July 2017 replacing the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* (SPA). This resulted in a new set of KPIs which were first reported in the SARA Key Performance Indicators and Customer Satisfaction Survey Report 2017-2018.

To measure SARA's performance against its qualitative KPIs, an annual Customer Satisfaction Survey is carried out. The results of this survey are also included in this report.

2.0 Summary of SARA activity

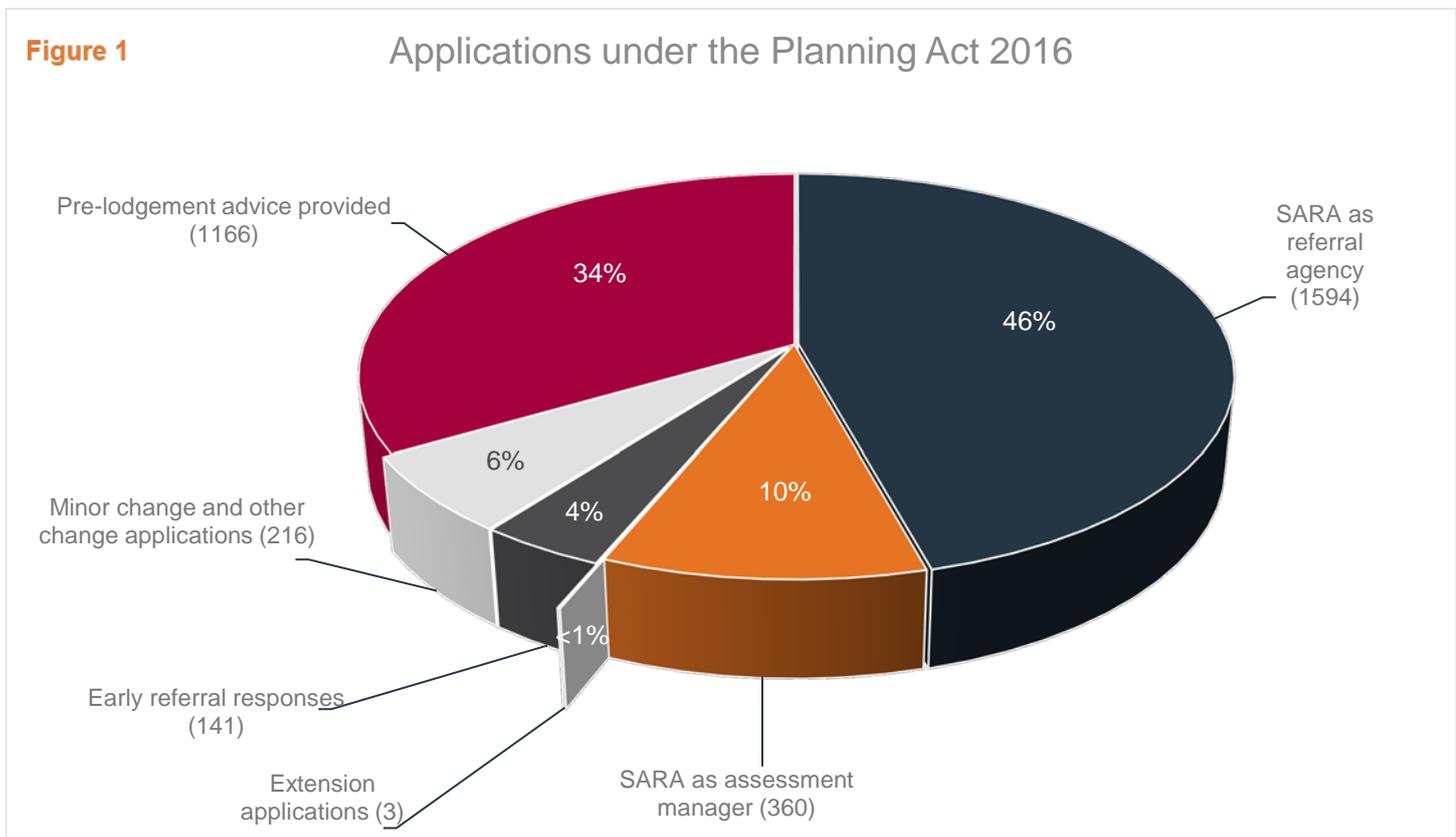
For the 2018–2019 financial year, SARA issued a total of 2314 decision and responses under the Planning Act and 42 decision and responses under SPA, comprising:

- 1632 referral responses by SARA as referral agency (including FastTrack5) of which 99.9 per cent were responded to favourably, and 0.1 per cent recommended refusal
- 362 application decisions by SARA as assessment manager, of which 100 per cent were approved
- 218 minor and other change applications, of which 100 per cent were approved
- 3 applications to extend the currency period (extension applications), of which 100% were approved
- 141 early referral responses.

SARA also issued:

- 1166 pre-lodgement advices, which include the provision of either written advice, or minutes, where a pre-lodgement meeting was held.

A breakdown of SARA's activities under the Planning Act for 2018-2019 is shown in Figure 1. (These figures do not include the 42 decisions and responses made under SPA in 2018-2019.)



3.0 SARA’s performance against 2018–19 KPIs

The following sections provide a snapshot of SARA’s performance against the adopted KPIs for the 2018–2019 financial year under the Planning Act only. The KPIs cover several core areas including customer satisfaction, assessment timeframes, information requests, pre-lodgement processes and appeals. The KPIs are measured against:

- **quantitative targets** through data obtained from the then Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, now Queensland Treasury (the department) online development application lodgement system MyDAS2
- **qualitative targets** through data obtained from the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

In this section:



the green ring shows that the KPI result met or exceeded the target



the green section of the ring shows the KPI result as a percentage of the target

3.1 Information requests

In 2018–19, under the Planning Act, SARA issued:

- 63 information requests as assessment manager
- 334 information requests as referral agency.

SARA met all relevant statutory timeframes around information requests. However, SARA did not achieve the KPI target for each measure.

Wherever possible, SARA seeks to minimise information requests. Where an information request is issued, it highlights deficiencies in the information submitted with the application. Through the pre-lodgement process and improved advice to applicants, SARA is working to improve the quality of application material.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result	Statutory timeframe	2018-19 results
As assessment manager , percentage of applications decided without an information request	85%	82%	N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	
As referral agency , percentage of responses issued without an information request	85%	78%	N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	
As assessment manager , median time taken to issue information request	8 business days	9 business days	10 business days	9 business days
As referral agency , median time taken to issue information request	8 business days	9 business days	10 business days	9 business days

3.2 Further advice

An assessment manager or referral agency has the opportunity to seek further advice from applicants via a further advice notice. In 2018-2019 under the Planning Act SARA issued:

- 21 further advice notices as assessment manager (6 per cent of assessment manager decisions)
- 207 further advice notices as referral agency (13 per cent of referral agency responses).

There are no statutory timeframes associated with the further advice process, however SARA met the KPI target for each measure.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result	Statutory timeframe	2018-19 results
As assessment manager , median time taken to issue initial further advice notice	11 business days	 10 business days	N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	
As referral agency , median time taken to initial further advice notice	11 business days	 11 business days	N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	

3.3 Decision timeframes

In 2018–19, under the Planning Act, SARA issued:

- 360 decisions as assessment manager
- 1594 referral agency responses
- five decisions on change representations as assessment manager
- 109 decisions on change representations as referral agency

SARA met all relevant statutory timeframes and KPI targets associated with the decision process.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result	Statutory timeframe	2018-19 results
As assessment manager , median time taken to issue a decision	22 business days	 19 business days	35 business days	 19 business days
As referral agency , median time taken to issue a response	20 business days	 19 business days	25 business days	 19 business days
As assessment manager , median time taken to assess change representations	15 business days	 2 business days	20 business days	 2 business days

As referral agency , median time taken to assess representations about a referral agency response	13 business days		N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI
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3.4 Post-decision changes – minor change, other change and extension applications

If an applicant wishes to change their application after it is approved, they are required to make a 'change application'. The applicant has the option to make a minor change or a change other than a minor change ('other change'). The nature of the change and SARA's original role in the application determine SARA's role in assessing the change application.

An applicant may also apply to extend the currency period of their application, which is an 'extension application'. An extension application must be made to the assessment manager before a development approval lapses.

In 2018–19, under the Planning Act, SARA assessed:

- 40 applications (with no affected entities) for a minor change
- four 'other change' applications as assessment manager
- 53 'other change' applications as referral agency
- three extension applications.

SARA met the statutory timeframes for these applications but did not achieve all the KPI targets.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result	Statutory timeframe	2018-19 results
As responsible entity , median time taken to assess a minor change application and issue a decision notice <i>Note: this KPI is limited to applications without an affected entity</i>	14 business days		20 business days	
As assessment manager , median time taken to assess an 'other change' application and issue a decision notice	22 business days		35 business days	
As referral agency , median time taken to assess an 'other change' application and issue a referral agency response	20 business days		25 business days	
As assessment manager , the time taken to assess and decide an extension to relevant period request	7 business days		20 business days	

3.5 Appeals

Appeals against the Planning Act can occur:

- if an applicant is dissatisfied with a development decision or condition; or
- a submitter (someone who has made a properly made submission about a proposed development) is dissatisfied with a development decision.

The department manages a range of court proceedings including disputes involving SARA decisions and conditions, as well as changes to approvals involving SARA. In 2018-2019, 148 SARA decision and responses were appealed, of which the department joined 21 court proceedings. SARA did not meet the KPI target for appeals.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result	Statutory timeframe	2018-19 results
Percentage of total decisions and responses appealed	<2%		N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	

3.6 FastTrack5

Certain types of low-risk development may be eligible to be assessed under the FastTrack5 framework which involves a shorter, five-day assessment timeframe, and a reduced fee. It is the responsibility of the applicant at the time of lodgement to nominate their application as being eligible under the FastTrack5 framework and provide the necessary supporting information and to pay the fee promptly. SARA did not meet the KPI target for the FastTrack5 process.

In 2018-19 SARA assessed 61 FastTrack5 applications.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result	Statutory timeframe	2018-19 results
Percentage of FastTrack5 referral responses issued within 5 business days	100%		N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	

3.7 Urban design trigger

The urban design trigger under the Planning Regulation 2017 is unique in that it provides Queensland Government with the ability to influence and advise applicants and local governments on significant projects to ensure the design contributes positively to the place and region. Emphasis is placed on addressing urban design considerations early in the design process. To support this, engagement at the pre-lodgement stage is encouraged and may remove the need for the application to be referred under the Planning Regulation 2017 as part of the development assessment process. For development applications referred to SARA for the urban design trigger, advice is sought from the Office of the Queensland Government Architect.

During 2018-2019 financial year, SARA responded to one application referred under the urban design trigger.

4.0 Customer Satisfaction Survey results 2018–19

Data for qualitative KPIs is obtained from the annual SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey, which was carried out in May and June 2019 for 2018-2019. Qualitative data provides a valuable insight into the experiences and satisfaction levels of SARA customers and stakeholders with the SARA process. The survey was emailed to 2951 people, including registered MyDAS2 users and other stakeholders known to the department. A total of 197 responses were received.

In this section:

-  the green ring shows that the KPI result met or exceeded the target
-  the green section of the ring shows the KPI result as a percentage of the target

4.1 Customer satisfaction KPI results

The SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey invites respondents to provide comments about the pre-lodgement process, information requests, conditions, MyDAS2 and staff service. These qualitative responses provide valuable insight to customer experience, including opportunities for improvements, which are summarised in section 4.2.1.

SARA achieved the stretch target for overall customer satisfaction but fell short of achieving the KPI target for customer satisfaction with the pre-lodgement process.

KPI measure	KPI target	2018-2019 result
Level of customer satisfaction with overall performance as assessment manager or referral agency	80% satisfied	
Level of customer satisfaction with the pre-lodgement process	90% satisfied	

SARA has a policy of not setting minimum information requirements for pre-lodgement meetings to encourage customers to take up the opportunity of a pre-lodgement discussion to support their development proposal. Where applicants have limited information about their proposal, an increased number of questions may be asked by SARA, which could contribute to a lower level of customer satisfaction. Improvements were made to the pre-lodgement process in 2018-2019 to make the process easier for applicants to understand.

4.2 Other Customer Satisfaction Survey results

The following table provides a summary of key findings from the results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey that are not related to a specific KPI.

Question	2018–2019
Pre-lodgement advice	
Pre-lodgement advice clearly communicated SARA's position, expectations and advice	76% agreed
Information requests	
Information request was clear and concise	82% agreed
Information request was reasonable	77% agreed
Decision notices, concurrence responses and conditions	
Conditions were reasonable	78% agreed
Conditions were clear and concise	77% agreed
Conditions included reasonable timing/timeframes for required actions	82% agreed
Staff service	
How satisfied were you with level of service provided by SARA officers?	82% satisfied

4.2.1 SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey comments

Customers were invited to provide comments throughout the survey in relation to certain topics within the SARA process, as well as being given the opportunity to comment about their overall experience with SARA. In total 460 comments were received, and common themes across the comments included:

- the quality of advice being provided by SARA and the timeliness of that advice, especially when relaying it to the applicants from technical agencies
- understanding the difference between, and purpose of, an information request and a further advice request
- improving information about the SARA process that is published and made available to the community
- inconsistency with the level and accuracy of advice being provided by different SARA offices
- the use and functionality of MyDAS2, including the payment process.

5.0 Continual improvement

The results from the KPI report and annual SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey provide the department with valuable insights about opportunities for further refinement and improvements to SARA operations. During the 2019–2020 financial year, SARA's continual improvement program will focus on a number of areas which are outlined in the below table:

Key monitoring areas	What we did in 2018-2019	In 2019-2020 we will:
Pre-lodgement	SARA operational changes were made to make the pre-lodgement process easier for applicants to understand and more efficient.	Continue to implement operational changes to SARA's pre-lodgement advice practices. These changes should continue to improve our customer's experience with seeking and receiving value adding advice. Further training for all SARA officers will be undertaken to ensure our revised processes and practices are being implemented.
Information requests and further advice	Training for departmental officers was carried out, in conjunction with new and updated guidance material. The format of SARA information requests and further advice notices was updated to ensure applicants can more easily identify important information and key areas requiring attention.	Feedback received from the 2018-2019 customer satisfaction survey highlighted that changes made to SARA processes and procedures that occurred late in the financial year had not yet materialised in improved satisfaction. SARA accepts that further work needs to be done to ensure that the issuing of these statutory notices is done in a clear and consistent way for the benefit of applicants. SARA will continue to implement and monitor the effectiveness of changes made in its business practices earlier in 2019.
Post-decision changes	SARA carried out an operational review of the post-decision changes it has assessed and identified some key opportunities for improvement, including updates to SARA processes and notices.	Implement the improvements identified last year, and review how the test for 'minor change' is being used.



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