

SARA Key Performance Indicators and Customer Satisfaction Survey Report 2020-2021

November 2021

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning connects industries, businesses, communities and government (at all levels) to leverage regions' strengths to generate sustainable and enduring economic growth that supports well-planned, inclusive and resilient communities.

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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 is administered by the state's planning portfolio which is located within the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. SARA was affected by machinery of government changes in the 2020-2021 financial year and for the period 1 July to 30 November 2020, was located within Queensland Treasury (QT).

The challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout the 2020-2021 financial year and SARA ensured that assessing and deciding development applications continued, notwithstanding most staff working from home for extended periods. SARA upheld the integrity of its assessment function using technology and rapidly adapting operational practices. Most standards of performance were maintained during this challenging time, despite the numbers of applications remaining relatively constant when compared to historical levels, and the number of pre-lodgement advices increasing by 279 when compared to 2019-2020 levels.

SARA is committed to continual improvement and rapidly responding to evolving challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite challenges, SARA continues to perform as one of the most efficient and effective state assessment entities in the nation.

Key elements of SARA's improvement culture have been reported on annually against a suite of adopted key performance indicators (KPIs) and an annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. These cover 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.

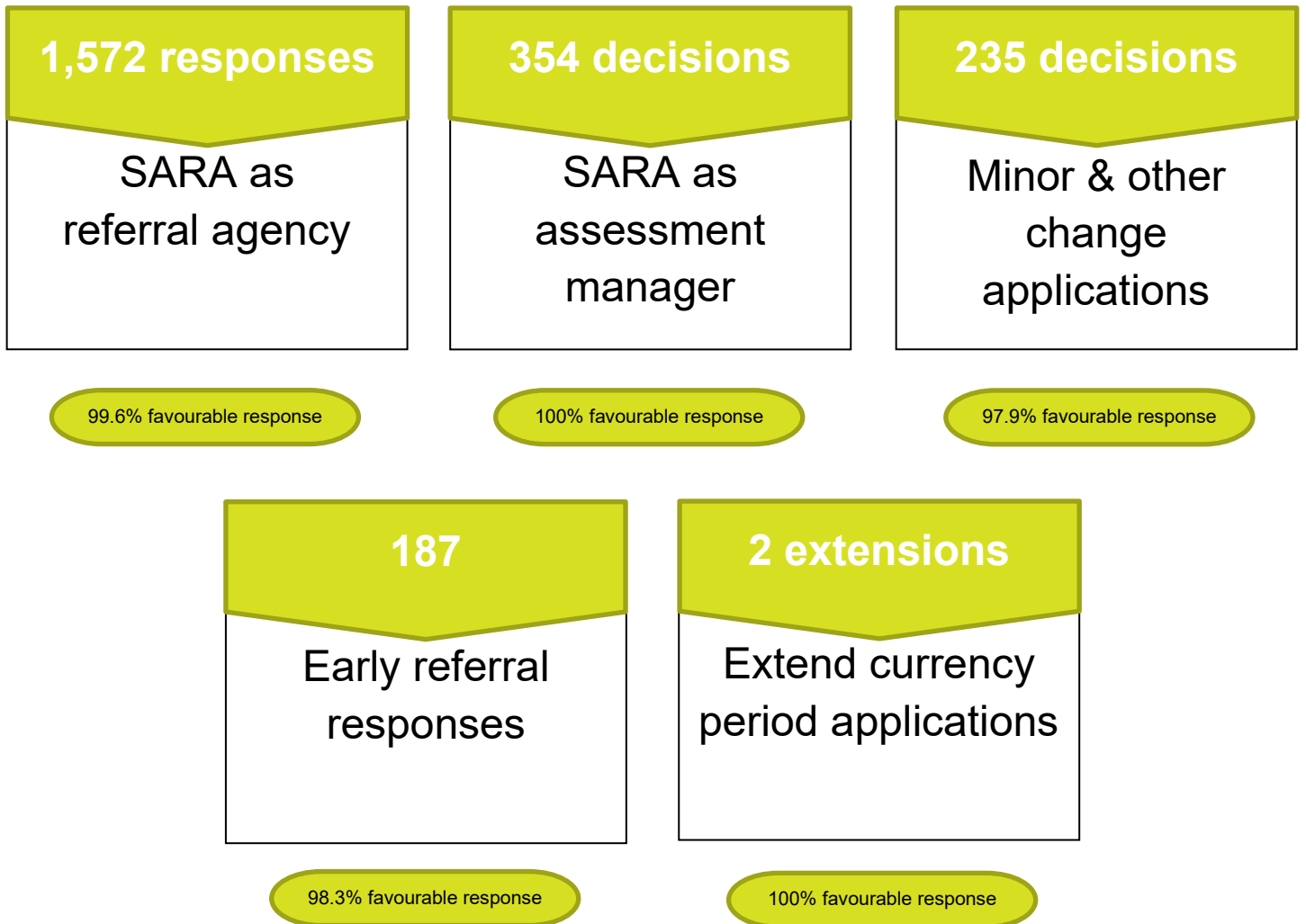
This process informs ongoing improvement and drives organisational change to deliver efficiency and best practice in the state's development assessment services.

SARA's KPIs for the 2020–2021 financial year focus on the following key areas:

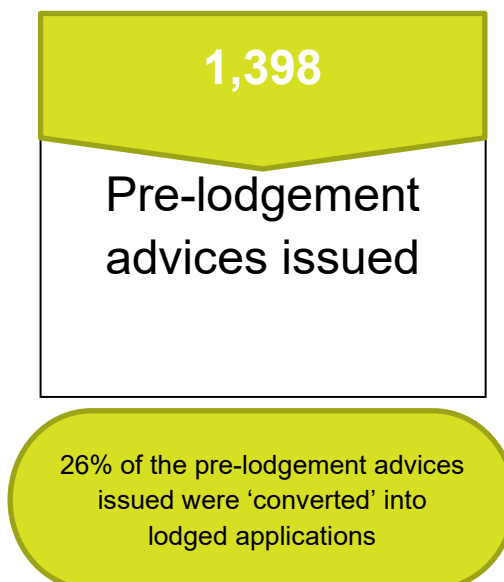
- pre-lodgement processes
- information requests
- overall assessment timeframes
- post-decision assessment timeframes
- FastTrack5 assessment timeframes
- appeals
- customer satisfaction.

SARA ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

In the 2020-2021 financial year, SARA issued a total of 2,350 decisions and responses under the *Planning Act 2016* (the Planning Act). The breakdown of applications is as follows:



There was a high rate of favourable responses and decisions across each of the application types.



SARA'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST 2020-2021 KPIS

The following sections provide a snapshot of SARA's performance against the adopted KPIs for the 2020-2021 financial year. 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 SARA's online development application lodgement system MyDAS2
- **qualitative targets** through data obtained from the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

In the following sections:



a full green ring represents that the result achieved or exceeded the KPI target or statutory timeframe.



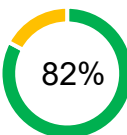
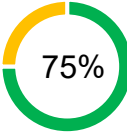


where the ring has two colours, this indicates that the result did not meet the KPI target. The green portion of the ring represents the proportion of the KPI target that was met, and the orange portion represents the proportion that was not met.



84% the number in the ring is the 2020-2021 result for that KPI or statutory timeframe.

INFORMATION REQUESTS

In 2020-2021 SARA issued:

- 66 information requests as assessment manager
- 378 information requests as referral agency.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result	Statutory timeframe	2020-2021 result
KPI #1 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	
KPI #2 As referral agency , percentage of responses issued without an information request	85%	 75%	N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	
KPI #3 As assessment manager , median time taken to issue information request	8 business days	 8 business days	10 business days	 8 business days

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result	Statutory timeframe	2020-2021 result
KPI #4 As referral agency , median time taken to issue information request	8 business days		10 business days	

SARA met all relevant statutory timeframes for information requests. However, SARA did not achieve the KPI target for all information request measures. There were two differences when compared to the 2019-2020 KPIs:

- KPI #1 was improved with a decreased by two per cent of responses issued without and information request
- KPI #3 was improved by one business day resulting in SARA achieving the KPI target in 2020-21.

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.

ADVICE

An assessment manager or referral agency has the opportunity to provide applicants with further advice. In 2020-2021 SARA issued:

- 42 advice notices as assessment manager (12 per cent of assessment manager decisions)
- 278 advice notices as referral agency (18 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. Both results improved by one business day in comparison to 2019-2020.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result
KPI #5 As assessment manager , median time taken to issue initial advice	11 business days	
KPI #6 As referral agency , median time taken to issue initial further advice	11 business days	








DECISION TIMEFRAMES

In 2020-2021 SARA issued:

- 354 decisions as assessment manager
- 1,572 referral agency responses
- six decisions on representations as assessment manager
- 107 decisions on representations as referral agency.

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

SARA demonstrated improvement in its results for KPI #9 by reducing the median time taken assess change representations from 13 business days in 2019-2020 to seven business days in 2020-2021. SARA also built on the 2019-2020 results for KPI #10 by improving the median time taken to assess change representations by one business day.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result	Statutory timeframe	2020-2021 result
KPI #7 As assessment manager , median time taken to assess an application and issue a decision	22 business days	 22 business days	35 business days	 22 business days
KPI #8 As referral agency , median time taken to assess an application and issue a response	20 business days	 20 business days	25 business days	 20 business days
KPI #9 As assessment manager , median time taken to assess change representations	15 business days	 7 business days	20 business days	 7 business days
KPI #10 As referral agency , median time taken to assess change representations	13 business days	 9 business days	N/A as there is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI	

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 determines SARA's role in accessing 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 2020-2021 SARA assessed:

- 31 applications (with no affected entities) for a minor change
- one 'other change' applications as assessment manager
- 59 'other change' applications as referral agency
- two extension applications.

SARA met the statutory timeframes for these applications but did not achieve all the KPI targets. However, SARA did improve on the result of all four KPIs relative to the 2019-2020 results:

- KPI #11 was improved by two business days
- KPI #12 was improved by 10 business days
- KPI #13 was improved by two business days
- KPI #14 was improved by one business day.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result	Statutory timeframe	2020-2021 result
KPI #11 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	
KPI #12 As assessment manager , median time taken to assess an 'other change' application and issue a decision notice	22 business days		35 business days	
KPI #13 As referral agency , median time taken to assess an 'other change' application and issue a referral agency response	20 business days		25 business days	

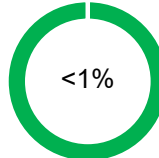
KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result	Statutory timeframe	2020-2021 result
KPI #14 As assessment manager , the time taken to assess and decide an extension to relevant period request	7 business days		20 business days	

APPEALS

Appeals against the *Planning Act 2016* can occur:

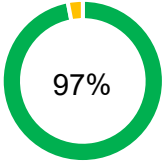
- if an applicant is dissatisfied with a development decision or condition
- if a submitter (someone who has made a properly made submission about a proposed development) is dissatisfied with a development decision.

The department manages a range of court proceedings, including disputes involving SARA decisions and conditions, as well as changes to approvals involving SARA. In 2020-2021, 148 appeals were served on the department where SARA was triggered during the development application. However, only 12 SARA decisions and responses were disputed as part of the appeal. The department joined 13 court proceedings and the KPI target for appeals was met. There is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result
KPI #15 Percentage of total decisions and responses appealed	<2%	

FAST TRACK5

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, provide the necessary supporting information and to pay the application fee promptly. While SARA did not meet the KPI target for the FastTrack5 process, it improved on the result from 92% in 2019-2020 to 97% in 2020-2021. There were 34 FastTrack5 applications decided in 2020-2021. There is no associated statutory timeframe for this KPI.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result
KPI #16 Percentage of FastTrack5 referral application responses issued within five business days	100%	 97%

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2020-2021

Data for qualitative KPIs is obtained from the annual SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey, which was carried out in March 2021 for 2020-2021. 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 a range of stakeholders, including MyDAS2 registered users. Almost 200 responses were received.

In the following sections:



a full green ring represents that the result achieved or exceeded the KPI target or statutory timeframe.



where the ring has two colours, this indicates that the result did not meet the KPI target. The green portion of the ring represents the proportion of the KPI target that was met, and the orange portion represents the proportion that was not met.


84%

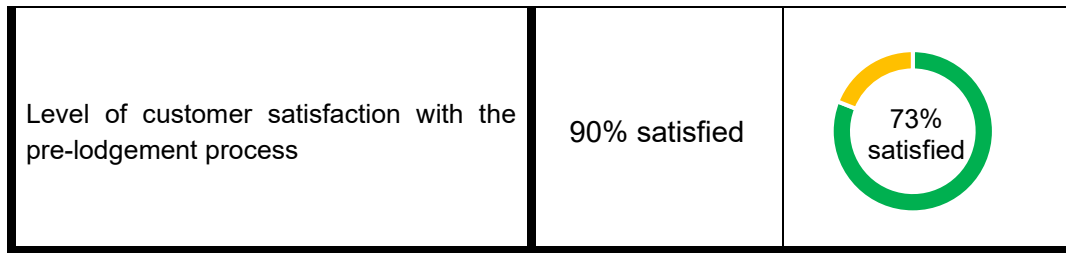
the number in the ring is the 2020-2021 result for that KPI or statutory timeframe.

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 did not meet the KPI target for overall customer satisfaction or for customer satisfaction with the pre-lodgement process. These results, and the comments associated, will be used to inform the ongoing review into SARA's engagement with customers and how to improve the pre-lodgement experience for customers.

KPI measure	KPI target	2020-2021 result
Level of customer satisfaction with overall performance as assessment manager or referral agency	80% satisfied	 79% satisfied



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	2020-2021	2019-2020
Pre-lodgement advice		
Pre-lodgement advice clearly communicated SARA's position, expectations and advice	68% agreed	68% agreed
Information requests		
Information request was clear and concise	79% agreed	70% agreed
Information request was reasonable	73% agreed	67% agreed
Decision notices, concurrence responses and conditions		
Conditions were reasonable	84% agreed	81% agreed
Conditions were clear and concise	86% agreed	80% agreed
Conditions included reasonable timing/timeframes for required actions	88% agreed	85% agreed
Staff service		
How satisfied were you with level of service provided by SARA officers?	79% satisfied	83% satisfied

Overall, the customer satisfaction levels improved throughout 2020-2021 for all categories except staff service. The results regarding information requests and decision notices, referral agency responses and conditions have increased in comparison to the 2019-2020 results despite satisfaction levels of staff service decreasing by 4%.

As part of the continual improvement program in 2020-2021, work continues to improve internal guidance material used by SARA officers, as well as the readability and format of external documents to ensure applicants have clear and concise information.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

The results from the KPI report and annual SARA Customer Satisfaction Survey provide valuable insights about opportunities for further refinement and improvements to SARA operations. In response to past customer satisfaction levels, focus is directed towards the pre-lodgement advice process, and the information request and advice notices.

Applicants are increasingly making use of SARA's pre-lodgement process, with the number of pre-lodgement advices issued increasing from 1,119 in 2019-2020 to 1,398 in 2020-2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic continuing throughout the 2020-2021 financial year resulted in challenges and has had an understandable and unavoidable impact on aspects of SARA's 'customer service'.

As customer satisfaction of the pre-lodgement process has remained stable at 68%, this will form the basis of SARA's continual improvement program in 2020-2021. There are several other projects also being undertaken to improve SARA operations. All continual improvement projects are outlined in the table below:

Key monitoring areas	What we did in 2020-2021	In 2021-2022 we will:
Pre-lodgement	<p>In 2020-2021 SARA investigated how the process can be improved to ensure that SARA officers are prepared for the discussions that may occur during the pre-lodgement and that the pre-lodgement process is as efficient and effective as possible for applicants.</p> <p>An additional 179 applicants took up the opportunity for pre-lodgement advice in 2020-2021 when compared to 2019-2020 levels, and lessons learned include that applications that provide as much detail as possible maximise the value of the pre-lodgement process for applicants.</p>	SARA will improve the external guidance for applicants on what applicants should provide when seeking pre-lodgement advice so that applicants have clear expectations on what is required in order for SARA officers to provide meaningful guidance and advice.
Information requests and further advice	<p>Feedback received from the 2020-2021 customer satisfaction survey indicates that the changes made to SARA processes and procedures have improved satisfaction with information requests and further advice.</p> <p>SARA has worked with all technical agencies to ensure consistency in the issuing of these statutory notices, and to demonstrate the benefit to applicants.</p>	SARA will continue to work with technical agencies to ensure that information requests and advice notices are used consistently, and that issues are clearly communicated to applicants to assist applicants to understand and address potential issues.
State Development Assessment Provisions (SDAP) review	In 2020-2021 SARA worked with all relevant technical agencies to review SDAP to provide more certainty for proponents in how to comply with state codes and	The amended SDAP will come into effect in early 2022.

Key monitoring areas	What we did in 2020-2021	In 2021-2022 we will:
	provide robust and defensible assessment benchmarks.	
KPI review	In 2020-2021 SARA reviewed the current KPIs to consider their effectiveness in delivering good planning outcomes.	As a result of the KPI review, the targets for assessing change representations as both assessment manager and referral agency have been reduced for the 2021-2022 financial year.
Trigger review	Is an ongoing project, the delivery of the trigger review was impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While conducting a review of SDAP, SARA identified triggers that could be improved.	<p>Progress the review of the triggers that are used to categorise the type of state interest that is affected or impacted by the proposed development application. It is anticipated that this review will provide information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the certainty and clarity of the triggers • any triggers that are not achieving their intent or causing confusion or disputes • any triggers that could be improved or removed.

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