

OntoIt.

The value of Independent Assurance in **Major Hospital Activation Programs**

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Overview

Delivering a new hospital is one of the most complex transformations a health service can undertake. While construction delivery is highly structured and governed, the operational readiness required to safely activate and stabilise a new facility is often more difficult to measure, coordinate and assure.

Independent assurance provides executive teams, boards and project partners with confidence that readiness activities are progressing appropriately, risks are visible early, and critical operational dependencies are being actively managed before Day One.

Ontoit's experience across major health infrastructure programs has demonstrated that independent assurance plays a critical role in reducing operational risk, improving decision-making and supporting safer openings.

The Challenge

Hospital activation programs involve hundreds of interdependent activities across:

- Clinical operations
- Workforce readiness
- ICT enablement
- Commissioning and testing
- FFE procurement and validation
- Facilities management integration
- Training and simulation
- Regulatory and accreditation requirements
- Patient and service relocation planning

These activities are typically delivered across multiple teams, vendors and governance structures, often under compressed timeframes and evolving project conditions.

Without independent assurance:

- Risks can remain siloed within workstreams
- Program optimism can mask emerging readiness gaps
- Critical operational dependencies may not be escalated early enough
- Executive teams may lack clear visibility of true readiness status
- Go/No-Go decisions become difficult to evidence confidently

The Role of Independent Assurance

Independent assurance provides structured oversight across operational readiness and transition activities, supporting:

- Early identification of readiness risks and delivery gaps

- Validation of readiness evidence and assumptions
- Executive-level visibility of program maturity
- Independent challenge and escalation where required
- Alignment across operational, ICT, capital and commissioning interfaces
- Improved governance and decision-making discipline

Importantly, assurance is not intended to duplicate delivery teams or governance structures. Instead, it provides an objective lens across the program to strengthen confidence, prioritisation and accountability.

Key Areas Where Assurance Adds Value

1. Governance and Program Integration

Independent assurance helps ensure governance structures remain aligned and focused on operational outcomes rather than siloed project delivery.

This includes:

- Reviewing governance effectiveness
- Confirming decision pathways
- Identifying interface risks between streams
- Supporting executive reporting and escalation

Programs with strong assurance functions often demonstrate improved alignment between capital delivery, operational readiness and ICT commissioning activities.

2. Readiness Visibility and Reporting

One of the most common challenges in activation programs is distinguishing activity completion from operational readiness.

Independent assurance supports:

- Consistent readiness definitions
- Evidence-based status reporting
- Identification of “hidden red” risks
- Validation of readiness criteria and Go/No-Go thresholds

This provides executive leaders with clearer visibility of actual operational preparedness.

3. Early Identification of Critical Risks

Assurance functions help identify emerging risks before they become critical path issues.

Examples may include:

- Delays to ICT integration testing
- Incomplete workflow validation
- Workforce onboarding dependencies
- FFE procurement or commissioning gaps
- Training program maturity concerns
- Transition window compression

Early escalation creates additional time for mitigation planning and executive intervention where required.

4. Operational Simulation and Day One Readiness

Simulation and operational testing activities are often where latent operational issues become visible.

Independent assurance can support:

- Validation of simulation objectives
- Identification of recurring operational themes
- Assessment of organisational readiness maturity
- Tracking of issue resolution and mitigation closure

This strengthens confidence ahead of activation and patient move activities.

5. Go/No-Go Decision Support

Go/No-Go decisions require organisations to balance operational risk, project pressures and executive accountability.

Independent assurance supports:

- Structured readiness assessments
- Independent review of evidence
- Risk-based escalation pathways
- Clear articulation of residual risks and mitigations

This enables more informed and defensible executive decision-making.

Outcomes

Programs supported by structured assurance models commonly achieve:

- Earlier identification of operational risks

- Improved executive confidence and visibility
 - Stronger integration across project streams
 - More consistent readiness governance
 - Reduced Day One instability
 - Improved operational transition outcomes
 - Enhanced organisational learning for future projects
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Ontoit's Perspective

Ontoit brings recent, hands-on experience supporting operational readiness and transition across major health infrastructure programs.

Our approach combines:

- Practical operational readiness delivery experience
- Executive governance and assurance capability
- Health service operational understanding
- Independent risk and readiness assessment
- Major project activation expertise

We understand the realities of compressed delivery timeframes, competing operational pressures and the complexity of transitioning from construction completion to safe healthcare operations.

Independent assurance is most effective when it is pragmatic, collaborative and focused on improving operational outcomes, not simply compliance reporting.

Key Takeaway

Independent assurance provides health services and project leaders with confidence that operational readiness activities are not only progressing, but progressing in a way that supports safe, sustainable and operationally effective Day One outcomes.

In complex healthcare projects, assurance is not an additional layer of governance, it is a critical enabler of safer activation and operational success.



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