



INSTITUTE OF COMMISSIONING & ASSURANCE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Commissioning Adherence: Where Construction Turns into Performance

PRESIDENT MESSAGE

By Paul Turner, P.Eng., PMP

The world doesn't need another report telling us projects are broken — we already know. How many papers have you read or books have you seen describing all the things wrong with the industry.

How many post-project public inquiries have to be written calling for the need for change and improved project performance (here's two examples: [Muskrat Falls Public Inquiry](#), and [James Stewart HS2 Report](#)).

The crisis is real. And it's been real for a long time. New government organizations such as NISTA are being formed to deal with this crisis

head-on and demand better from the industry. These groups are calling for immediate change, even though they may not know what the change needs to be.

The solution is not some new fancy technology that's going to save us.

The solution is not a new flavour-of-the-month sprint or agile project management method.

The solution is simple – projects don't need more project managers – projects need more leaders that know how to deliver outcomes – that can manage projects across all disciplines and phases to break down silos, align project teams, and align systems to deliver project outcomes.

There is only one group with experience on

projects that knows how to do this, and has done it before.

The solution is crystal clear to us at ICxA – projects need trans-disciplinary commissioning-led leadership – project leadership at the beginning of projects that knows what it takes to deliver project outcomes and understands the right decisions to get there.

Experience matters – and if you've never successfully delivered a project across the finish line, it's impossible to know what to do at the beginning of projects to make that happen.

ICxA was created to flip the script of the broken construction industry - to mandate commissioning-led governance at the start of every project. We are proving that when leadership starts with the end in mind (since they've delivered the end in the past), projects don't drift off course. They finish with confidence, clarity, and credibility.

The only group that has the expertise and experience to deliver project outcomes is commissioning leadership – the leaders that know the decisions required at the beginning to avoid failure at the end.

Commissioning leaders hold underperforming groups accountable at the end, and can design accountability into the project right from the start.

Commissioning leaders know how to plan projects for systems-based completions, which is the only proven method to successfully complete projects.

Commissioning leaders are the only ones that own the REAL project outcome (hint: the outcome is not construction).

Picture this for your projects: there is no longer a need to gamble billions. Instead you can trust certified Outcome Authorities to steer projects to success. Imagine when it is normalized and expected that industries deliver megaprojects on time, on budget, and exactly as promised. Think of a future where public trust is restored and can believe in what gets built. No more wasted tax-payers dollars. No more added costs to cover losses for the energy systems we depend on and the infrastructure society needs.

That is the future that ICxA is creating - together.

There is huge dysfunctional momentum in the industry that very much enjoys the current chaos and would prefer things stay the way they are. But we've passed the tipping point – massively influential organizations are demanding change and holding



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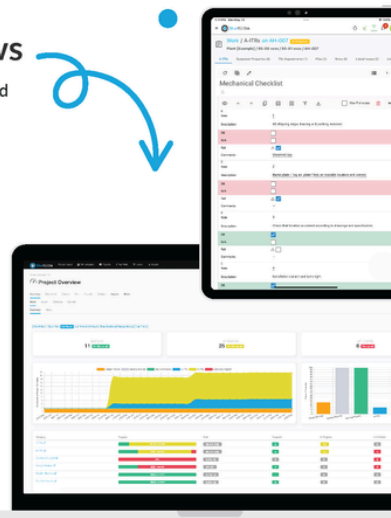
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underperforming groups accountable – and ICxA is partnering with these power-house organizations to give them the solution – multi-national conglomerates and government policy makers – to stamp out the dysfunction. When these partner organizations blink – stock markets rise, media headlines are instant, and everyone pays attention. These are the change-leading organizations that have been calling for construction reform, and immediately recognize that ICxA has the solution (more on these partnerships in the future).

This is more than a professional association. ICxA is a movement.

A rallying point for progressive companies and project leaders who refuse to accept failure as normal.

Every ICxA member adds to our momentum. Every voice strengthens our authority. And every step takes us closer to reshaping the way the world delivers its most critical projects.

The time for “assumed-failures” is over. The time for commissioning leadership is now. Individually, we remain frustrated – as partners, we drive mandatory change.

Stand up to project dysfunction and lead project outcomes boldly. The future of project delivery starts with ICxA.

Paul Turner, P.Eng, PMP
President, ICxA



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THE ANALOGY CORNER

Distilling key ICxA themes into clear, concise, and engaging perspectives

by Peter Foxley

*ICxA Commissioning Government
Policy Director*



FILLING THE HOLE, BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

Two landmark provocations have shaped the intellectual and institutional landscape of the infrastructure sector - each delivered by a figure whose authority made avoidance impossible.

Peter Morris: The Scholar Who Saw the Void

Professor Peter Morris, former Head of the Bartlett School of Construction and Project Management (now Sustainable Construction) at UCL, was more than an academic - he was a founding architect of modern project management theory. His work helped codify the discipline globally, influencing standards, curricula, and professional bodies across sectors.

Yet in his seminal piece “A Profession with a Hole in its Head,” Morris issued a stark warning: project management had become **technically proficient but intellectually hollow**. It was managing delivery without understanding purpose. Projects were being

scoped, funded, and executed without strategic commissioning, and without clarity on the outcomes they were meant to assure.

His critique reverberated through academia, prompting curriculum reviews, governance research, and a rethinking of what it truly means to “manage” a project. But institutional reform lagged. The “hole” remained.

Paul Morrell: The Integrator Who Lost Patience

Paul Morrell, appointed in 2010 as the UK’s first Chief Construction Adviser, came from the sharp end of practice. As a former senior partner at Davis Langdon and a trusted government advisor, he witnessed firsthand how fragmentation undermined delivery. His now-famous provocation - “*Integrate, you bastards*” - wasn’t rhetorical flair. It was a diagnosis of systemic failure.

Morrell’s frustration was aimed squarely at industry institutions, professional bodies, and delivery chains that refused to collaborate. He had seen billions spent on infrastructure that didn’t perform - because no one had been empowered to integrate across disciplines, phases, or outcomes.

His speech catalysed industry debate, inspired integration charters, and nudged procurement



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THE ANALOGY CORNER CONT'D...

reform. But again, the structural fix remained elusive.

Enter ICxA: The Response in Practice

The **Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA)** exists to confront these critiques - not with commentary, but with dynamic architecture.

- It fills Morris's "hole in the head" with a sovereign discipline: **commissioning-led governance**.
- It answers Morrell's integration imperative with credentialed authority: **commissioners who assure outcomes across boundaries**.

ICxA's frameworks are designed to be both **intellectually rigorous** and **institutionally actionable**:

Challenge	ICxA Response
Strategic incoherence (Morris)	Systems-wide - commissioning-led governance and outcome assurance delivery frameworks
Fragmented delivery (Morrell)	Credentialed transdisciplinary leadership embedding integrated governance and validation
Academic inertia	Curriculum partnerships and credential pathways
Institutional silos	Coalition-building across professional disciplines, sectors, and geographies

***"the future of
infrastructure doesn't
need more management -
it needs commissioning."***

From Provocation to Profession

Morris and Morrell didn't just critique - they cleared the space for transformation. ICxA steps into that space with a sovereign discipline that is strategic, integrative, and outcome-assured.

Because the future of infrastructure doesn't need more management - it needs **commissioning**.

“COMMISSIONING” ISN'T ONE THING - IT'S THREE. AND ONLY ONE OF THEM IS SOVEREIGN

*by Peter Foxley, Global Director | ICxA
Governance and Policy Integration*

In the world of infrastructure, few terms are used as often - or understood as differently - as **commissioning**. It's a word that crosses sectors, disciplines, and delivery models, often meaning something entirely different on who's speaking. At ICxA, we've long championed commissioning as a **governance-led practice**. But to do so with credibility, we must first clarify what commissioning means across its many domains - and why our definition is designed to unify them.

Let's unpack the three dominant definitions in circulation today - and why ICxA's framing stands apart.

Technical Commissioning (Construction & Real Estate)

Commissioning in construction and consultancy typically marks the final phase of a capital project - where systems are tested, verified, and optimized before handover. It's a procedural check on operational readiness, not a strategic framework for governance. Functionality is the focus; strategic intent is incidental at best, invisible at worst.

Key features of Technical Commissioning:

- System validation (HVAC, MEP, fire safety, etc.)

- Performance testing under real-world conditions
- Compliance documentation and sign-off
- Ensuring the building facilities are safe and functional

Why it matters: This form of commissioning is essential - but it's reactive. It validates what's been built, not **why** it was built or **how** its purpose was governed. It's the last mile, not the strategic journey.

Service Commissioning (Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals)

In health systems, commissioning refers to the strategic process of planning, procuring, and monitoring services to meet social needs. It's about care pathways, not capital assets.

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Key features:

- Needs assessment and service design
- Contracting and provider selection
- Outcome monitoring and performance review
- Sharing resources fairly and responsibly

Why it matters: This model governs service delivery - not infrastructure. Rooted in national health systems, it reflects a social needs ethos and prioritises care over capital. But it leaves a critical gap: it doesn't engage with the governance of built environments or the strategic intent behind capital investment.

Socio-Technical Commissioning (ICxA's Trans-disciplinary Leadership Practice)

ICxA defines socio-technical commissioning as a governance-led sovereign function - embedded from inception, shaping strategic intent, systems-wide integration, and outcome assurance across the lifecycle. It's not a phase. It's a philosophy for setting up socio-technical projects for success.

Key features:

- Strategic alignment and institutional credibility

- Lifecycle integration and readiness validation
- Credentialed commissioners and outcome assurance frameworks
- Global benchmarking and coalition-led reform

Why it matters: This is commissioning as a transdisciplinary practice that spans professional silos - not a task. It governs why a project exists, how it delivers public value, and who holds accountability. It's upstream, enduring, and transformative.

Why the Distinction Matters
(See table below)

Commissioning may be a familiar word - but it lacks a shared understanding. ICxA redefines it as a sovereign leadership discipline; a transdisciplinary practice that embeds lifecycle traceability, public accountability, and outcome assurance from the first intent through to long-term system adaptation. While existing business models serve functional roles, only ICxA's framework has the depth and legitimacy to transform how infrastructure is conceived, governed, and sustained at scale.

Aspect	Technical Commissioning	Healthcare Commissioning	Sovereign Commissioning
Focus	Systems performance	Service delivery	Evidence-based decisions - knowledge management system
Timing	End of project	Ongoing service cycle	Adaptive value creation models that shape infrastructure performance across its lifecycle.
Domain	Built assets	Health/social care	Aligns service intent with infrastructure capability
Accountability	Contractors, engineers	Public health bodies	Certified experts leading across professional disciplines to embed public value
Tools	Test scripts, compliance docs	Contracts, KPIs, needs assessments	Credential operational readiness, outcome assurance frameworks



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COMMISSIONING ADHERENCE: WHERE CONSTRUCTION TURNS INTO PERFORMANCE

*by José Carlos Musegante Neto
Project Leader, Verum Partners*

A lot of projects 'finish' without ever really beginning. They get to the end, the project executive arrives on-site to cut the ribbon, the pictures are taken with everyone in the control room, and yet operations does not trust (or even want) the new assets. This is rarely due

to a lack of effort from groups working on projects; it is usually due to the absence of a group that connects project intent to the real plant performance. What's missing is commissioning adherence right from the start – the mechanism that coordinates people, systems, information, and decisions across the entire project lifecycle.

Commissioning adherence refers to three simple fundamentals. First, there are permissives (the pre-requisites for operation). These are the minimum conditions that must be satisfied for commissioning and startup to commence safely - power must be available and tested, instrumentation must be installed and calibrated, interlocks verified to be safe, and tightness confirmed to verify installation. Second, checklists and procedures that



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document the verification process that are clear, short, and repeatable must be established in advance – these are the step-by-step methods to follow, the expected pass/fail values, and the backup plans or contingencies to follow if something goes off track. Third, objective evidence proves if the systems meet performance requirements. These are the values measured and recorded, the photos taken, the logs recorded, and the authority signatures that turn opinion into fact and prove the system meets performance requirements.

As you know, collaboration during commissioning and startup is essential. To facilitate collaboration, we used a tool called Digital Obeya during weekly commissioning meetings that listed the permissives and showed the same readiness metrics to everyone. SWP owners and operations were able to co-create a visual DOR on P&ID drawings and sign off checklist and procedure templates before the first test. This greatly helped the team stop debating 'who failed' and start deciding 'what is missing to release the next SWP.'

On our projects, we link construction AWP (Advanced Work Packaging) from the path of construction into a coherent path of commissioning, translating responsibilities into clear SWPs (System Work Packages) connected to construction packages (IWP/CWPs). With a gated approach, testing commences only when all construction work package constraints are removed (materials, energization, calibration, access) and listing readiness in the construction constraint log. Instead of 'rushing to start,' we get the team to solve issues where they arise, rather than deferring issues to later.

On another project I joined with new utilities

and automation from different vendors, punch items were scattered in spreadsheets, responsibility was unclear at every test, and each start-up was delayed by small 'acceptable deviations' that added up to significant risk. It was a mess that we needed to clean up. To do this, responsibility boundaries were made visible on each of the drawings (P&IDs and layouts) using a clear color legend: what belongs to the contractor, what belongs to the client, and what is shared - the latter explicitly meaning integration of information. Each system's permissives were agreed and recorded; when someone asked to 'push ahead,' the conversation returned to what remained to be satisfied - not to who shouted the loudest. Runbooks fit on two pages: steps, target values, tolerances, and what to do if something failed. Every execution produced



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evidence that fed a clear readiness dashboard (systems ready, tests planned vs. executed, critical punch and its aging).

We used a web/mobile commissioning tool to execute runbooks with evidence (photos, readings, signature) and automatic blocking when a permissive failed. In this way, we were able to leverage the data and make better decisions – cleaning up the mess and making sense of the chaos.

In a test of SWP-U-204, an interlock permissive failed. The system blocked runbook completion, opened a task for the owner, and recorded the evidence in the system. At the Obeya meeting everyone saw the same board, decided how to remove the constraint, and rescheduled the test. Since the decision was joint and transparent, there was no finger-pointing – everyone collaboratively worked together to solve the problem.

Start-up took place within the agreed window, with fewer trips back to the site and with a handover where operations felt part of the process rather than receiving a pile of problems. There were, of course, surprises – there always are. The difference was that the team had a mechanism to assess the situation and determine a solution together. Everyone understood the process, so the next test only entered the stage when the SWP was truly ready. Any future snags went into a visible queue, each was assigned an owner, due date, and closure criteria. With this approach, commissioning stopped being 'the last hurdle' and started operating as a system of Outcome Assurance.

Linking this practice to AWP is not just for optics – it is what prevents each discipline from optimizing its own piece at the expense of the whole. Construction AWP paired with

“Adhering to commissioning is choosing to focus on 'ready to operate' rather than throwing things across the finish line and hoping for the best.”

commissioning SWP provides sequence and boundaries – who does what, when, and with which inputs – via CWPs/IWPs. The commissioning process keeps completions into measurable operational readiness, with systems tested in the right order, with permissives satisfied, runbooks executed, and trustworthy evidence, all in alignment with the outcome that justified the investment.

When planning, engineering, construction, and operations start discussing permissives (not just dates), visible responsibilities (not contractual trenches), and evidence (not impressions), the project focus changes from pressure to start to the capacity to operate. That is where construction turns into performance.

Adhering to commissioning is choosing to focus on 'ready to operate' rather than throwing things across the finish line and hoping for the best. With AWP for sequence, SWPs for system clarity, and a digital dashboard to document every step, the path to completion is no longer a guess. That is how teams collaborate, and technology streamlines the process – to produce predictable start-ups and reliable handovers.