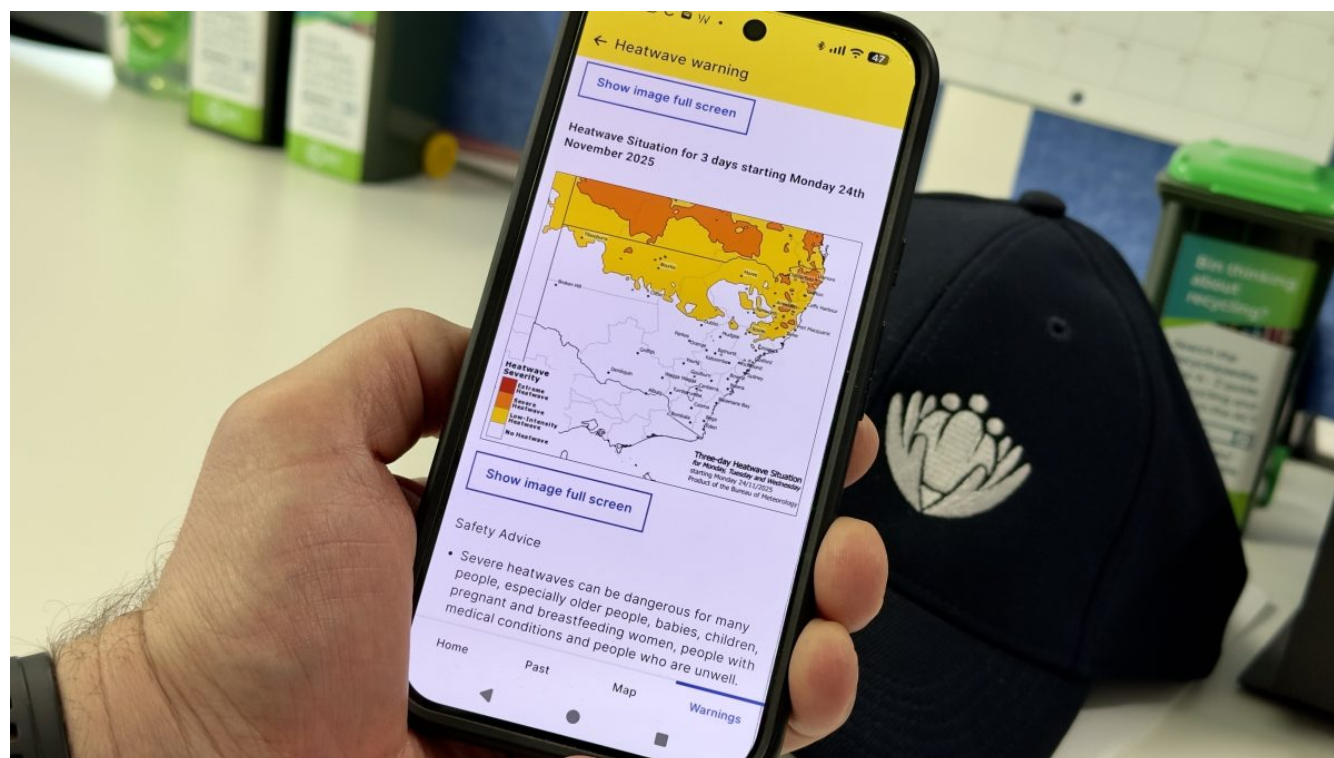


Region Canberra

Locally Grown.

BOM-site debacle shows governments have to rein in costly ICT projects

28 November 2025 | By Ian Bushnell



The new BOM website has been a profound disappointment. Photo: Michelle Kroll.

Like many Australians, I was confounded by the new Bureau of Meteorology website when it appeared unannounced on our screens.

Difficult to navigate with way too many clicks to get to where you wanted to go, and a radar map far inferior to the previous one (since rectified), it felt like a bunch of geeks who had never used the site had gotten hold of it and transformed it into their idea of a cool website.

How many times have you given up on a business when confronted with a hip homepage that looks like a work of abstract art?

The new BOM site is nowhere near a work of art, but abstract? Yes. There have been plenty of times since go-live when the white flag has gone up.

The BOM is a major public asset and vital source of information for farmers, event planners, emergency services, major sports organisers and the like, not to mention everyday people doing their washing or worrying about relatives in the line of storms and cyclones.

And journalists, for whom the weather story is bread and butter.

On Wednesday, the ACT, along with NSW, was under a Severe Weather Warning, with high and potentially destructive winds raking the Territory.

Reports started coming in of power outages and trees down, and it was important to report the extent of the winds.

What should have been a quick reference to the Canberra Observations – something done any number of times before – turned into a frustrating game of ‘which page and heading they were under?’, until resorting to a simple Google search turned them up.

It should not have been that hard. It may have been logical, even intuitive, for the designers, but it wasn’t for someone who has been working with the BOM site for years.

One can only imagine the hair-pulling going on among farmers and the like seeking more complex information vital to their operations and not being able to access it.

Was it ever road-tested adequately with the people who actually use it?

If it was just a dud website that needed some repairs, the public outrage could have been contained. But when the bill was finally revealed this week – \$4.1 million for the redesign, \$79.8 million to build it, and \$12.6 million to launch and security-test it – taxpayers could rightly feel like they were being taken for a ride.

That’s close enough to an eyewatering \$100 million for a lemon.

Technology is a wondrous and dazzling thing (perhaps too dazzling), and governments of all persuasions have been adopting computing solutions to automate functions, provide more efficient services, and hopefully cut the cost of doing business.

Yet too often, ICT companies promise the world at a certain price, only for departments and agencies to discover they will have to fork out more as the project goalposts shift due to unforeseen circumstances.

One only has to look at the ACT Government’s experiences with ICT to see how millions of dollars of our money can go up in smoke without even achieving a result.

It abandoned the Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) project in 2023, but not before spending nearly \$78 million over six years.

The now infamous rollout of the MyWay+ public transport ticketing system was part of \$64 million, 10-year contract. The product did not, and still doesn’t, meet expectations.

Both experiences were marked by poor planning and management, and in the HRIMS instance, the Auditor-General also identified governance issues.

The BOM’s botched website refresh is yet another message to the government to take more charge of costly ICT projects, especially given the squeeze on budgets and spending priorities.

It has cost the Bureau more than the \$96 million price tag. The reputational damage alone to an organisation that should be Australia’s most trusted is incalculable.

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