

GRC Case Study

Applying Australian Government cyber security standards to a major cloud service provider

Summary

A major public cloud service provider (“the Client”) engaged Foresight to conduct an Information Security Assessors Program (IRAP) assessment of its cloud-based systems and services. Unlike typical system-specific IRAP assessments, an effective yet holistic approach was necessary to ensure appropriate assurance was achieved. Foresight addressed this complex challenge using a combination of its deep cyber security and cloud technology expertise, as well as a robust assessment methodology to ensure a risk-based and defensible approach was applied. The outcome demonstrated practical and value-add findings and recommendations for the Client. Foresight continues to provide ongoing assessment services for the Client and has been engaged to provide other advisory services.

Our client’s challenge

The Client has a global footprint and is commonly recognised as the market leader in cloud services. Many government agencies and private sector corporations seek to leverage services from the Client, which highlights the need to provide reasonable assurance that its cloud services can securely host customer data. The Client has a significant and complex network of infrastructure; and is constantly expanding its cloud service offerings.

To provide customers with the assurance that government classified or business-critical information would be securely stored and processed, the Client required an IRAP assessment company to perform extensive and ongoing assurance work. Additionally, the Client was required to undergo reassessment every 24 months, while accommodating the constant changes of its in-scope cloud services.

Scope of engagement

The Client engaged Foresight to conduct IRAP assessments of its cloud eco-system. Given the volume, complexity and dynamic nature of the Client’s service offerings, an assurance program was required to provide IRAP assessment services on a continuous basis.

How Foresight helped?

To meet the Client’s need for continuous assessment, Foresight developed a structured program to provide assessment services throughout the year. This program

accounted for the Client's dynamic technology roadmap which involved the constant addition and removal of services, as well as the changing compliance requirements driven by regular updates of the Australian Government Information Security Manual (ISM).

Foresight assembled an expert team comprising IRAP assessors and experienced consultants with in-depth understanding of cloud technologies, and extensive knowledge of the ISM. As the ISM was initially designed to guide the security control implementation for Australian government agencies, the direct application of the ISM to the Client's system architecture often required a risk-based lens with a focus on the intent of the control. Foresight tailored its approach to accommodate the unique and complex architecture of the Client's systems, while assessing the implementation of security controls against ISM requirements. Given the enormous scale of the Client's systems, Foresight utilised an effective and easy to administer sampling methodology to ensure a risk-based yet representative approach was applied when determining security control effectiveness.

The outcome

Over the years, Foresight walked alongside the Client on its compliance journey, helping the Client to better meet Australian government security requirements. Foresight's work also provided Australian government agencies with a reasonable level of assurance to protect their information assets when leveraging the Client's cloud services. The Client has become a widely used cloud service provider across many government agencies and corporations. Its cloud services are regularly used for workloads at the OFFICIAL and PROTECTED classification levels.

The engagement has also given Foresight a unique perspective and experience on assessing government agencies or corporations that leverage the cloud services of the Client. This has enabled Foresight to further develop relevant and innovative security assurance and engineering services to its diverse range of customers.

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