SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATIONS: CREATING VALUE FOR MEMBER COUNCILS IN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

Local Government Associations play a vital role in not only representing their constituent Councils, but also sharing best practice and knowledge. The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), with its 77 local government members, is no exception. Membership is voluntary and the Association is proud of its coverage and is determined to preserve it. It was important for all the local governments to tap into the organisation's vast quantity of documents and co-ordinate its dealings with members. New information technology, including CRM technology (Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online) and a comprehensive document management system, are part of the value proposition, as is Microsoft SharePoint 2013 and Microsoft Azure.

"Maintaining that 100 per cent membership is critical for us," says Jake Boyle, LGAQ's manager of internal business deployment.

"When we go to consult with State Government, if we have 77 members behind us, well that is a lot more powerful than if we had, say, 60. As the old saying has is, you are better off coming to the party with a choir than a soloist."

When it comes to proving its value to its local government members, LGAQ's long corporate memory is key. The organisation has subject member experts with an extraordinary recall of the twists and turns in various policy debates through the years but when it came time for a technology refresh, LGAQ wanted to make it easier for all to tap into the organisation's

vast quantity of documents. Another goal was to co-ordinate its dealings with members so everyone at LGAQ knows who their colleagues are in contact with and why.

"Our day to day business is providing advice and information to our members and having access to historical as well as current information is critical for us. We store all of the documents we have about a particular issue along with records of conversations, decisions, meetings and political background so when we get to the next wave of a particular issue we can quickly review what has gone on before. Most of our members will have a very good memory of their experience and we need to make sure we can keep up with them," Boyle said.

Everyone in LGAQ will eventually be using the new solution. Further down the track, there is the possibility LGAQ will provide access to some of its member. Choosing a platform that could be extended was therefore essential. LGAQ is taking a long term and integrated view and it wanted a technology supplier that could do the same.

"We wanted something we know is going to be around for a long time," Boyle said. "We know what it's like to be stuck with an un-supported product and we didn't want that to happen again.

"We have gone through this process knowing that what we launch on day one will only be part of the puzzle. We needed a solution that will grow with us and potentially offer enhancements to the way we do business in the future."