# Continuous Improvement Network
## Records Service Improvement

Records are assets that have value beyond the immediate environment. Record Management is the systematic process of capturing, organising, sharing and using information to enable the City of Playford to meet their statutory requirements, strategic objectives and deliver services to the Community. Record Management service in Playford includes:

- Records Storage
- Mail and Courier service
- Enterprise Content Management (ECM) utilisation
- Records Management training
- Freedom of Information

Records Management team has 2 fulltime, 2 part time and I casual part time employees who have been working in Playford for more than 15 years and have worked under several different teams and managers. In a recent change, the service was brought together with the analytics team to form Analytics and Information Solutions team. Records management officers highlighted the challenges they face in managing the organisation records:

- Employees from across the organisation send hard copy records and records officers have to process and register these records. The number of boxes that come to the team keeps increasing above and beyond their capacity to process. Within a year the team would get approximately 200 boxes. This leads to the records in boxes being stored without processing.
- Poor utilisation of ECM in the organisation due to which network drives are at capacity with duplication of records and missing records
- Records officers are processing mail and courier service for the organisation which is taking up further resources for processing the records.

Playford records management officers are very knowledgeable and expert in their area however, they are challenged in their capacity to manage the processing of organisation records which are increasing by manifold every year. The subject matter expertise of records management officers and the analytical capability of the analytics team came together in September 2018 for records service improvement at Playford.

**The Team**

| Process Owner: | Records Management Officers and Records Management Quality Coordinator |
|---|---|
| Improvement Lead: | Shikha Sharma, Manager Analytics and Information Solutions |
| Team Members: | Anika Semmler – Business Support Officer |
| | Ann Parnell - Records Management Officer |
| | Denise McGarrigle – Quality Coordinator Records Management |
| | Farideh Bidhendi – Records Management Officer |
| | Jill Banning – Reporting & Systems Officer |
| | Rhonda Cooney - Records Management Officer |
| | Tamara Martin- Casual Records Management Officer |

## Solution Scope

At the start of this improvement project, the team had 5925 boxes of records back log which was stored both onsite and offsite due to space constraints. Records management officers had little hope of ever getting the records backlog finished because new boxes kept on increasing while the team tried to work on the backlog. The organisation had limited knowledge of what information assets it owned, as most onsite records in the backlog remain unprocessed. This created blind spots for Council and increased the risk of failing legislative requirements and suffering reputation damage. There was poor utilisation of ECM in the organisation leading to duplication of records and missing records. In addition, Records officers were also responsible for managing daily mail and courier service which further took away time from working on processing the records.

Council has the legislative obligation to govern records management according to the State Records Act 1997 and non-compliance can result in maximum penalties of $10,000 in fines and two years' imprisonment for staff who dispose of an official record without proper authority. By processing and destroying paper records the fire hazards risk is reduced. It also reduces WH&S hazards from manually handling, lifting and processing boxes of records. It improves the service delivery times to the community, as it takes two business days to retrieve a box of records from offsite storage, in addition to the time spent searching through and processing the box. It decreases the risk of the Council making an uninformed decision due to an absence of critical information that is sitting unprocessed in the backlog, creating damage to the organisation's reputation if the information is uncovered at a later date or by a third party.

## Improvement Opportunity

A review of the Council's records management practices had identified a number of areas where an improvement in processes was required to achieve record compliance, ECM utilisation, digital transformation and overall efficiency.

With the shift towards digital communication there is a reduction in the volume of hard copy mail items that are processed daily. Therefore, Australia post and courier service was analysed to understand the number and types of items being transferred to optimise the service.

Records backlog and digitisation project was established to discontinue approximately 200 ongoing incoming boxes and to process existing back log boxes. At the commencement of the project the Council had a total records backlog consisting of 5,925 boxes with 3,776 boxes in offsite storage and 2,149 boxes stored in the Playford Operations Centre (POC). Physical records stored onsite incur an opportunity cost by taking up approximately 90 square metres of physical space in and around the compactus rooms. The offsite records is costing the organisation approximately $8,732 per year in off-site storage which includes a retrieval cost of $2.10 per box plus a delivery fee of $13.79 per delivery, with a two-business day delivery time, resulting in increased information retrieval costs and times for staff, also reducing community outcomes.

Records management team scans and register records that come to them packed in boxes because people are not using ECM. Several teams across the organisation either send hard copy records or maintain their information in the quasi-records management system that exists across the G and S drives.  Therefore, outcome based approach was used to refocus records management vison and strategies were developed to improve records management practice in Playford.

**Improvement Methods**

Outcome driven analytics was used to improve records management service. First step was to define the outcome for records management service. Records management outcome is effective and efficient management of corporate records to enable the City of Playford to meet their statutory requirements, strategic objectives and deliver services to the Community.

Success in embedding analytics is more about the people than it is about the tools. The records management officers have worked in the organisation for a long time and it was important to gain their trust to believe that analytics can help them to achieve their goals. One on one discussion and workshops with records management officers were held to understand their work, their challenges and things they wanted to achieve in their work. Based on these workshops and meetings three projects were developed

1. Records Management Back log and digitisation project,
2. Service review project for Australia post and Courier services, and
3. Governance of records management.

Data collection processes were established to collect information and develop baseline. Historical data using information from invoices, contracts, ECM registration were also added to improve the baseline. A worksheet was created and following information was collected:

- Number of boxes onsite and offsite, boxes processed onsite and offsite, size of boxes and the space they were occupying, cost of floor space, cost of onsite/offsite boxes storage, retrieval and transport cost

- Courier and Mail in and out data, number and types of items, items requiring ECM scanning and items received through reception, cost of the service

- Size of network drives in total, department wise and team wise, ECM utilisation team wise.

- Incoming boxes from teams which were sending more than 10 boxes/year, types of items being sent in boxes by analysing the boxes sent in last 3 months

**Solution Implemented**

The work started with empowering the records management officers by changing the vision of records management and aligning it with the business outcome about efficient and effective corporate records management. This was followed by implementing an organisation wide communication strategy to uplift the records management function in the organisation. The problem of records backlog, lack of information governance and poor utilisation of corporate records management system was highlighted in the organisation. In every communication channel such as email, intranet and meetings the focus was on the vision that records management officers' role is not to scan and register documents into ECM for the whole organisation; instead their role is the governance of records management and increasing system utilisation.

To stop the backlog from growing we worked on digitisation of incoming boxes for scanning and processing to the Records management officers. The teams which were sending 10 boxes or more per year were identified and the items they had sent in last 3-6 months were listed. We met with the managers of those teams and went through the list. Most of the items that were sent were either printed off from the system or could have been saved in the system at the point of origin. Managers were surprised by the list and realised that the practice has continued because no one bothered to question it before. They agreed with the proposed change that they will not send any boxes for scanning and processing to records management officers instead it will be done by their team. In return, we assured them the support in digitising and registration of the processes so that paper based records can be reduced. Once, the high users were engaged and agreed for proposed changes in the records management service was communicated in the organisation. As a result, the incoming boxes for scanning and processing were completely eliminated and enhanced processes got implemented to reduce the paper based records.

By elimination of incoming boxes records management officers got redirected to target backlog. Two teams of record management officers were formed with 1 FTE at offsite and 1 FTE at onsite to reduce backlog. Onsite backlog required more work as the boxes were not catalogued so the nature of all of the information was not known. A worksheet was created to list down the number

of boxes that were processed. Without adding any new resources and just providing a visualisation of number of boxes being processed every month, records management officers were motivated and reduced the backlog by 30% in period of 6 months. With this trend it is highly likely that the records management officers can get rid of the backlog in next 2 to 3 years.

With the shift towards digital communication there is a reduction in the volume of hard copy mail items that are processed daily. Therefore, Australia post and courier service was analysed to understand the number and types of items being transferred to optimise the service. Australia post service was changed from daily morning incoming drop off and afternoon outgoing mail collection to same time mails in and out. Courier service was changed from daily five sites to three or two day's services with exception for library 5 days/week. Data was used to identify key users and they were engaged before the change. The service drop on various sites was also based on the data that was collected for last 6 months and some historical data that was available. The main focus is process digitisation therefore, we will continue to analyse the items being sent through and ways to digitise the process to stop paper based records and increase system utilisation.

To improve records governance in the organisation it is important to align the responsibilities of the teams and their managers in managing the records in accordance to the legislation. Therefore, Records Management Policy which was adopted in 2006 was redeveloped. The team developed revised records management policy and a new data governance policy which clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of employees in records management.
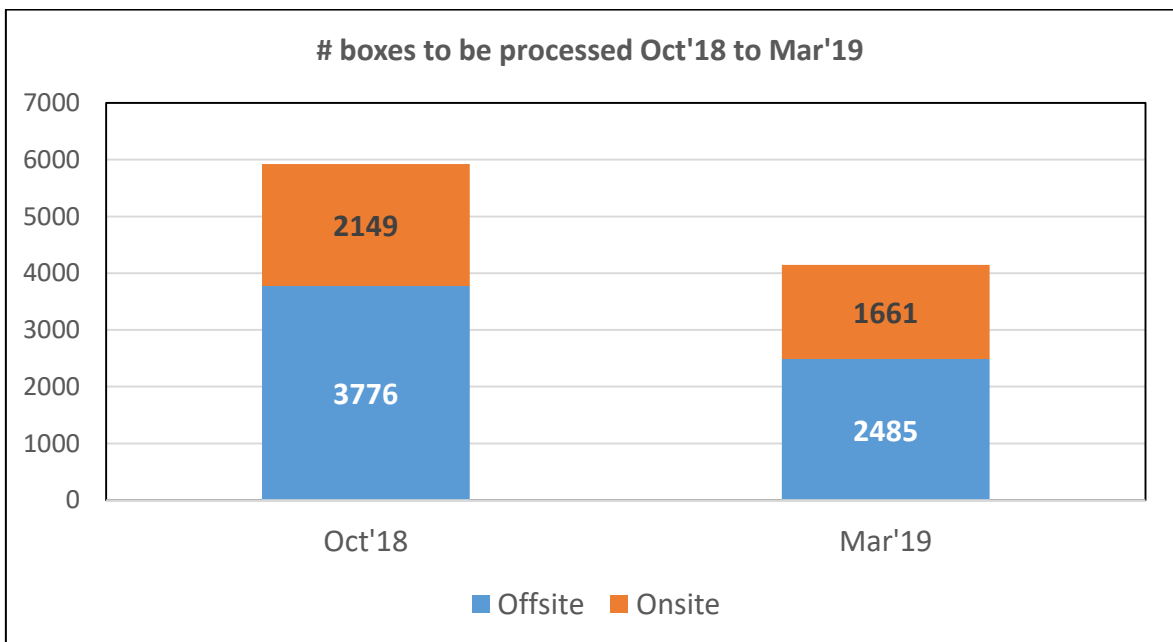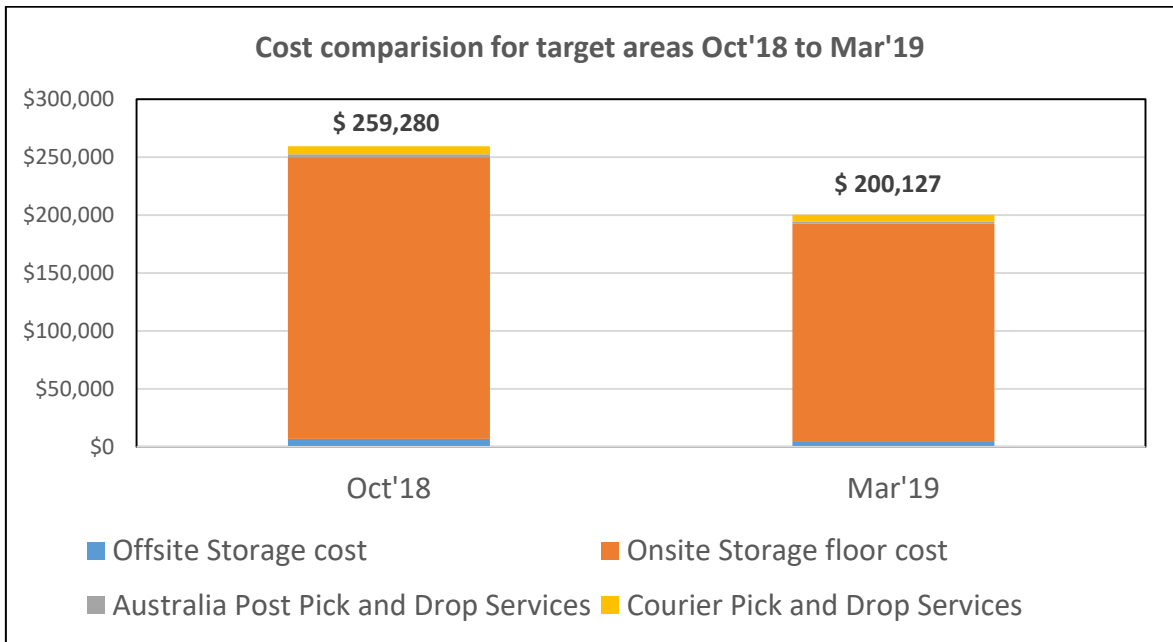
To improve the ECM utilisation in the organisation Records Improvement Program has commenced. As part of the program, Analytics and Information Solutions team will be working on reducing network drive size and increasing ECM utilisation. The team has developed processes to continuously monitor the size of drives and ECM utilisation. Baseline data about drives size, number of folders, number of files and ECM files and active users have been collected. ECM training and refresher training is being provided along with ECM upgrade which is being undertaken by ICT.  Since the backlog is reducing the records management officers are now shifting their focus towards records governance role. They are establishing systems and processes to remove the quasi-records management system that exists across the network drives and are working with individual teams to help them transition towards using ECM and better records management practice in the organisation.
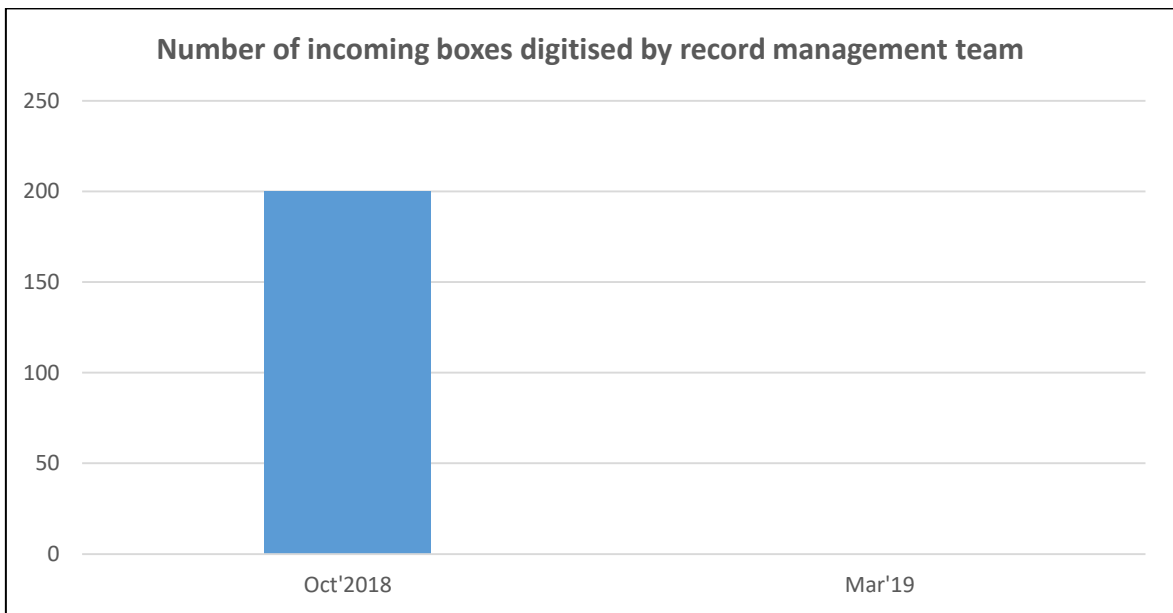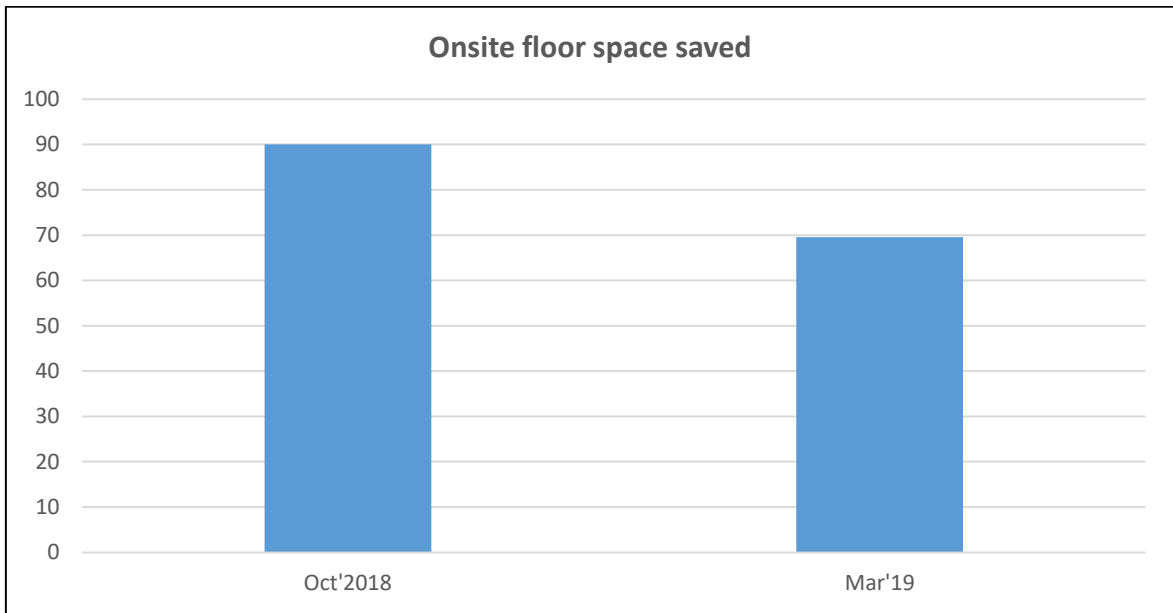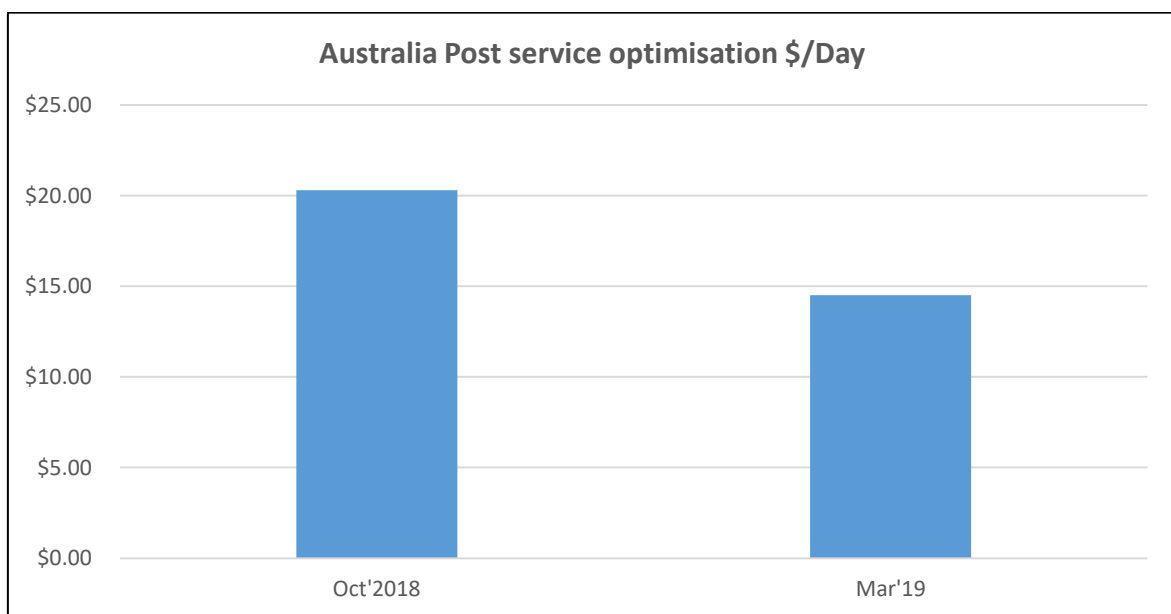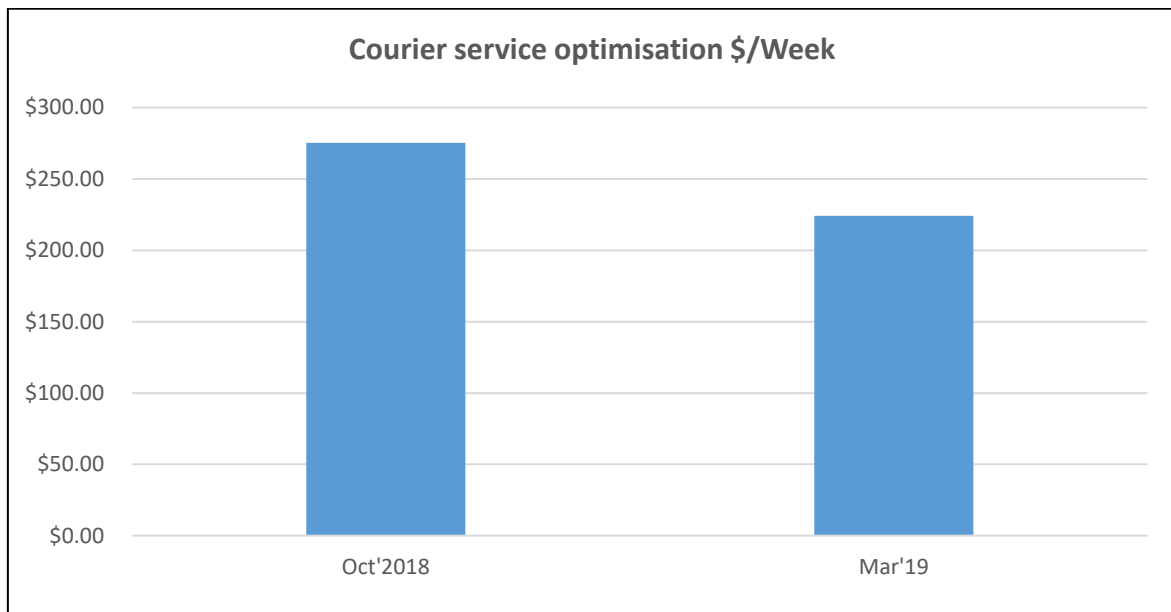
**Benefits Realised**

**Actual Savings in 6 months**

| Description | October 2018) | March 2019 | Improvement |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Description | October 2018) | March 2019 | Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of boxes to be processed (total) | 5925 | 4146 | 1779 boxes processed. 30% reduction in backlog in 6 months |
| Offsite boxes to be processed | 3776 | 2485 | 1291 boxes processed. 34% reduction in offsite backlog in 6 months |
| Onsite boxes to be processed | 2149 | 1661 | 488 boxes processed. 22.7% reduction in onsite boxes in 6 months. |
| Offsite cost for storage | $6859 excluding retrieval and transport cost | $4897 | $1962 or 28.6% cost reduction in the contract for storage and it will be more when the contract will be renewed. |
| Onsite floor space saved (cost of extending floor space= $2700 per square meter) | Approx. 90 square meter | 69.56 square meter | 20.44 square meter floor space saved. 20.44m2X$2700= $55,188 saved in floor space during 6 months |
| Number of incoming boxes digitised by record management team | Approx.200 boxes/year or 100 boxes in 6 months | 0 | 100% stop on the incoming boxes. 8.38 m2 per Year ongoing floor spaces saved. |
| Australia Post (service streamlined to have pick up and drop off at the same time) | $20.30/day | $14.50/day | $5.80 saved per day. $ 1450 saved per year. 28.5% reduction in cost. |
| Courier service (5 days a week dropped to 3 or 2 days per week with exception to library still running 5 days per week) | $275.37/week | $224.22/week | $51.15 saved per week. Saved $2557 per year. 18.5% reduction in cost. It will be more in future as we continue to analyse what items are being sent and working towards digitisation |

**Cost comparision for target areas Oct'18 to Mar'19**

$ 259,280

$ 200,127

Legend:
- Offsite Storage cost
- Onsite Storage floor cost
- Australia Post Pick and Drop Services
- Courier Pick and Drop Services



**# boxes to be processed Oct'18 to Mar'19**

Oct'18: Onsite 2149, Offsite 3776
Mar'19: Onsite 1661, Offsite 2485

Legend:
- Offsite
- Onsite

**Onsite floor space saved**



**Number of incoming boxes digitised by record management team**

**Courier service optimisation $/Week**



**Australia Post service optimisation $/Day**

## Realised Benefits

- Approximately 1 FTE ongoing saving will be achieved as a result of 100% digitisation at source and elimination of current backlog
- Targeted 2 years of time line to finish current backlog with existing strategy
- Council is providing efficient and effective services by minimizing litigation risks, promoting accountability and transparency and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements
- As records management officers are listing the onsite records less time is being spent in locating records which were earlier dispersed in different rooms without being catalogued or listed
- There are less chances of records being lost as RM team has better understanding of the

records stored
- Better compliance with statuary records legislation
- Duplicate records are being reduced and effective retention schedules are being implemented which is driving safe destruction and deletion of records and optimising space utilisation
- Automation and digitisation of business processes that Analytics and Information Solutions team is coordinating to stop the incoming boxes is also providing the opportunity to increase business efficiencies and reduce costs
- Improved adherence to the records management policies and procedures by uplifting the records management function in the organisation
- Improved productivity of records management officers due to role clarity, empowerment and recognition of their work

## Summary

Records management officers were facing a great deal of challenges in coping with the demand of scanning and processing records in the organisation. Poor system utilisation for keeping records has created a quasi-records management system that existed through network drives. It was also clear that due to mail and courier service the records management officers were losing time to work on records. In addition, they were not empowered to play a governance role in improving records management practices due to which there was lack of vision and direction in managing records.

For the past six months the Analytics and Information Solutions team has used outcome driven analytics to define and measure the outcome/ purpose of records management service. This has helped in aligning the vision and the role of records management officers towards efficient and effective records management instead of operational activity of scanning and processing records for the whole organisation.

A planned communication strategy to uplift and increase the awareness of good records management practice is being implemented. Using different communication channels within the organisation people are made aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding corporate records management. Records management officers' governance role is being promoted so that people see them as custodians for managing good records management practice in the organisation instead of a group processing mails and hard copy documents. New Records management and data governance policies are developed so that records management officers can use these policies to drive better information governance in the organisation.

Records management officers are empowered; they are motivated and are delivering at very high productivity level. They have processed 30% backlog in just 6 months. The incoming boxes have been stopped by supporting teams to register and scan their own documents or assisting them in digitising their processes. The Australia post and courier service has been optimised to reduce the

time records management officers have to spend on processing these and also digitising the processes to reduce further mail and courier service in the organisation.

A 'Records Improvement Program' has commenced under which a planned approach is being taken to remove the quasi-records management system that exists across the network drives. Analytics and Information Solutions team is working with individual teams to help them transition towards using ECM and better records management practice in the organisation. All teams are being retrained on registering records according to record management guidelines.

## For Further Information

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Note the details above relate to the organisation that implemented the improvement activity that the case study relates to.