

CASE STUDY

MidCoast Council

Policy Management as a Service
Implementation



Overview

MidCoast Council is a newly merged regional New South Wales Council formed through the amalgamation of three prior Councils and one Water Authority. The 900 staff of MidCoast Council provide a diverse range of local government services to a regional residential population of 92,000 over a 10,000 square kilometre service area with a population density of 0.09 persons per hectare, 190 kms of coastline, 3,590 kms of road and 487 bridges. The spectacular beauty and diversity of the MidCoast Council area makes it a region which draws significant tourism.



MIDCOAST
council

BACKGROUND

As an amalgamated Council creating significant changes to business processes and technologies, it was important MidCoast Council put in place a central set of policies and procedures. The Council was formed by NSW Government proclamation in May 2016 through the merger of the former Great Lakes, Greater Taree and Gloucester Shire Council and MidCoast Water.

CHALLENGES

- Consolidating the different sets of policies and operating procedures from each organisation into a central unified system so as to give strong corporate governance for the new entity.
- Mitigate Council risk (both regulatory and technical) plus address legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Enhancing work quality and efficiency through consistent good practice, and establish clear controls to demonstrate regulatory compliance.
- Delivering an outcome in a timely manner whilst having limited resources to do so.

SOLUTION

MidCoast Council entered into a discussion with Kaon Security (Protocol Policy Systems' ANZ partner) who had a ready-made comprehensive suite of IT policies already cross-referenced with standards relevant to the organisation, and therefore addressed several key considerations:

- Saved considerable time: MidCoast Council truly did not have the time to rationalise four different, disparate, inconsistent and, at times, out-dated sets of policies. Resources were already heavily occupied with post-amalgamation work.
- Provided a unifying approach: choosing a ready-made policy suite meant MidCoast Council avoided showing preference for any existing policies from any of the previous councils merged to form the new council.
- Policies were already mapped to standards such as ISO 27002 which helped the organisation align with security recommendations published by the Australian Signal Directorate (ASD).
- Written in plain English, easily understood by non-technical staff.
- Technically simple to implement, make accessible, maintain and update.
- Very cost effective.

BENEFITS

The delivery process from was very efficient and incorporated a 2 day workshop.

"The whole exercise took approximately 8 weeks to conclude and the outcome was exactly what was needed for an organisation whose IT staff needed to be free to focus on post-amalgamation projects and work, and who saw they had discovered a ready-made off-the-shelf offering which appropriately addressed governance, risk and quality concerns" says Nev Finch, Manager Information and Communication Systems.

"We would have not been able to produce an equivalent suite of comprehensive policies and probably saved 2 to 3 man years in making this investment"

Ongoing, the policy content is kept up to date by a team of experts. This means any changes to the underlying standards in the system are taken care of, including any resulting changes to the policy statements in Policy Management as a Service. This represents a significant saving for the organisation in terms of time, money and effort.

LEADERSHIP

The focus of the new Council entity has been on providing overall consistency following the amalgamation of multiple Councils, through the deployment of new set of unified policies. Policy Management as a Service has provided a high quality standard for IT Policies for the new MidCoast Council.

Our intention is to effectively "market" or "socialise" the importance of these policies to:

- Senior management: to provide MidCoast Council a means to strengthen governance, reduce risk, and put in place more effective compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
- IT staff: to provide them with a starting point for prioritising and developing technical procedures to achieve consistent results and reduce the number of reactive support requests.
- To MidCoast Council staff: to successfully and simply show the importance and relevance of these policies, how easily they can be accessed and their plain non-technical language

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