



# Objective

## OBJECTIVE CASE STUDY CITY OF DAREBIN



### ORGANISATION City of Darebin

### INDUSTRY Local Government

### BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

- Improved productivity
- Increased accountability and transparency
- Improved business processes
- Retention of corporate knowledge
- Staff collaboration
- Improved transparency and accountability

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**An audit of the City of Darebin's information management practices in 2000 identified the need to improve existing processes to enable the Council to perform more effectively and efficiently. The Council realised that they had to develop a long-term information management strategy and make significant changes to information management practices if they wanted to continue providing valuable services to the Darebin community.**

Darebin is one of the largest, most diverse communities in Victoria. City of Darebin stretches 53 square kilometres from Melbourne's inner northern suburbs of Northcote and Fairfield out to Reservoir and Bundoora. Darebin has over 55,000 properties, including 55,253 residences and 4,727 commercial/industrial properties.

City of Darebin was formed in June 1994 as a part of the Victorian Local Government restructure. The amalgamation of the former cities of Northcote, Preston and parts of Coburg saw a significant loss of corporate memory as a result of high staff turnover during that time. Driven by the high cost of resources required to recover lost information,

City of Darebin implemented a Knowledge Management Strategy and a formal Records Management system.

### DAREBIN'S INFORMATION EVOLUTION

Darebin had a number of legacy stand-alone database systems in operation which were designed to manage paper records. The databases often restricted access only to those officers responsible for specific tasks. This restricted information sharing across the Council.

Staff created their own informal personal information systems which further limited the Council's ability to share information. Gaining access to information was often dependent on knowing who to ask for it and what exact type of information to ask for.

This created challenges for staff as they relied on a variety of information from different areas of the Council to assist with policy making, strategy development and business processes.

Mr Lance De Blaquiere, Co-ordinator Records Management, City of Darebin said: "The change and growth in information management requirements saw Darebin

“Objective has positively **improved** Darebin’s knowledge management **capabilities** and operational **efficiencies.**”

**Mr Lance De Blaquiére**  
Co-ordinator Records Management,  
City of Darebin



experiencing problems with managing and sharing information throughout the Council.

“To address this challenge, we put together a team tasked with revising Darebin’s Knowledge Management Strategy. The team comprised of representatives from different areas of the Council. Their role was to provide advice, assistance and support for the activities associated with the project.”

Darebin’s business drivers for revising its Knowledge Management Strategy were:

- Enabling the Council to deliver the highest possible value and service to stakeholders.
- Timely access to information for informed policy-making, decision-making and planning.
- Meeting corporate and internal accountabilities.
- Supporting the Council’s leadership role.
- Enabling staff responsiveness and proactive action.
- Supporting the organisational core values of collaboration, accountability and respect.
- Maximising the return on human and other resources.<sup>1</sup>

The Knowledge Management Strategy was developed in alignment to Darebin’s principles of good governance, accountability, responsiveness, leadership and learning, innovation and responsible resource management.<sup>1</sup>

To better understand the elements of successful Knowledge Management strategies, the team participated in a series of best practice Knowledge Management presentations. The Council also organised for an independent information audit to examine the Council’s information needs. With the information gained from both activities, the Knowledge Management team created a Knowledge Management Strategy which established Darebin’s information management plan for the future and included the implementation of an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS).

## AN INFORMATION REVOLUTION FOR DAREBIN

Based on the audit recommendations, the project team identified the following objectives for the Darebin EDMS:

- Enable a transition to an electronic office.
- Support Darebin’s electronic service delivery, e.g. e-business.
- Provide access to diverse and dispersed hard copy documents and records systems.
- Manage routine ‘office’ documentation, e.g. word-processed documents.
- Eliminate labour-intensive processes for hard copy document management, e.g. file and correspondence management.
- Support the requirement for a workflow-enabled infrastructure.
- Support the management of the total customer interface, e.g. response to requests and complaints from outside.
- Enable risk management in information management.<sup>1</sup>

Darebin required a single information repository for the Council that assisted staff in managing paper files and electronic documents.

They wanted to phase out disparate legacy databases which solely recorded incoming information and instead provide a complete view of information for Council staff.

The solution had to enable staff to capture, store, find and share information by themselves rather than relying on the Records Management team. The system also needed to integrate with Darebin's existing information technology infrastructure.

Following a rigorous tender process, Objective was chosen as the preferred solution by City of Darebin.

"We chose Objective because we believed it to be an easy to use, flexible and streamlined solution," said Mr De Blaquiére.

Objective is now used Council-wide by more than 400 staff to manage a range of electronic and physical records, such as: correspondence and reports, drawings and plans, legal documents, application records, certificates of title, photographs and videos, as well as client records and personnel files.

"Objective's capability to integrate with our core systems such as the Pathway (property, rates & valuations system) software, IntraMaps Geographic Information System, and our email systems Novell GroupWise and more recently Microsoft

Outlook meant the transition to Objective for our staff was straightforward as they were being exposed to a familiar interface. Our staff became motivated to change their information management practices as they saw the benefits of a shared information environment," said Mr De Blaquiére.

### DELIVERING BUSINESS BENEFITS

"Objective is the Council's major information repository that underpins many of the Council's information and business processes. Objective has positively improved Darebin's knowledge management capabilities and operational efficiency.

"The adoption of Objective throughout the City of Darebin has been positive. This has been driven by continuous management support of the system and staff appreciating the value of having timely access to information with the ability to share a complete story," said Mr De Blaquiére.

Since the implementation of Objective in December 2002 Darebin has captured over 600,000 documents into the system, and is currently adding around 140,000 new

documents each year.

Achievements for Darebin from this project include:

- Council's "corporate memory" is preserved with documents securely stored and maintained – no more lost or misplaced documents.
- Documents of all formats are being captured and accessed electronically through document and drawing scanning, email capture, and Microsoft Office integration.
- The system is accessible by staff from all council worksites including offices, libraries, works depot, shop fronts, and leisure facilities.
- Using Objective "electronic objects", over a dozen custom designed electronic on-line registers have been developed to manage, track and report on requests for action and requests for service bookings.
- Electronic "employee files" have been introduced for all staff – maintaining security of information through the use of Objective privileges and audit records.

The Records Management Team continues to provide system training and support to staff to



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capture and manage information in Objective. Objective has enabled Darebin's staff to have access to all Council information on a 'need to know' basis. Staff are no longer required to approach the Records Management team to locate documents as they have the capability to do it themselves. Staff can access physical records in Objective through an electronic image captured when the document is received, as well as providing immediate access to physical files.

“Within Objective there is a folder for each property in the council. If an issue is raised relating to a property, officers can go to the relevant folder and get a holistic view of all transactions related to that particular property. This has improved customer service by enhancing staff responsiveness to customer requests.

“With Objective we are now able to provide a faster, more accurate response to enquiries received from our community,” said Mr De Blaquiere.

Information sharing and staff collaboration has improved Council-wide. Previously, if a manager was consolidating a report, multiple staff would have to contribute information

individually by emailing their own information directly to the manager. The manager would then consolidate the information into the one report.

Objective has enabled the managers to store reports into Objective, and allow each person to collaborate on that one document.

“We have seen positive benefits for the Council and community by using Objective.

“City of Darebin is constantly evolving and Objective evolves with us. As a result, there is more scope for us to continue building the solid foundation we have with Objective. Further plans include building closer integration with the existing Pathway system, developing workflow applications, smarter scanning options and using Objective for meeting and committee management,” said Mr De Blaquiere.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Ellis, J., 2005, Chapter 11: Implementing a solution for electronic recordkeeping in the public sector, in J. McLeod & C. Hare, Managing Electronic Records, Facet Publishing, pp. 165-182

## ABOUT OBJECTIVE CORPORATION

Objective Corporation (ASX:OCL) is an established leader and specialist provider of proven content, collaboration and process management solutions for the public sector.

Our solutions empower public sector effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, helping governments deliver better services at a lower cost to the community.

Through direct customer engagement, Objective is committed to delivering outcomes that have a positive effect on the public sector, its citizens and the community.

Since 1987, we have been trusted by Government and Top 1000 corporations to deliver long-term valued business outcomes.