Glamorgan Spring Bay Council has dramatically reduced its information technology software costs by moving its accounting and financial functions to a real time, web-based package.

Council’s software costs have dropped from an upfront installation and upgrading costs of up to $50,000 and support charges of $15,000 per year plus extras, to just $64 a month using the revolutionary Xero system.

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council General Manager, David Metcalf, said the new cloud-based finance and accounting software had been launched at the beginning of July and it was working extremely well. “We stumbled onto Xero because we needed to upgrade our accounting management and financial reporting and the cost of alternative solutions were prohibitive,” Mr Metcalf said. “The result is we’ve saved up to $50,000 in upgrade costs and nearly $15,000 a year in software support.”

Xero is an online accounting system designed specifically for small to medium businesses. The company was founded in New Zealand in 2006, and has offices in Wellington, Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, San Francisco and the United Kingdom.

“We’ve adapted the Xero software to run our $10 million revenue business, covering property capital valued at nearly $1.4 billion, 350 kilometres of sealed and unsealed roads, and a diverse range of public infrastructure, and it’s accessed by 15 users in Council,” Mr Metcalf said. “It gives us a complete accounting system from general ledger, departmental accounts, to specific projects. Departmental managers can run consolidated, live, up-to-date reports for their departments or projects.”

The system provides for live cash flow analysis and future cash flow requirements and has full taxation reporting including BAS reporting, as well as a simple asset register linked to the other functions. Council is also processing a live payroll covering some 72 people per fortnight using the fully integrated Xero payroll system.

Mr Metcalf said the three necessary applications for Local Government were systems to manage property and rates, strategic assets management, and finance and accounting. “Undoubtedly, Xero is the best finance-accounting package available for small to mid-sized councils. Brighton Council’s Microwise Australia software, Propertywise, covers rating, water and sewerage billing, receipting, animal control, building and planning controls, and the strategic asset management software provided by its partner, Melbourne-based Assetic Pty Ltd, provides the third piece of the package,” he said. “I would urge all councils to look at the substantial software savings and operational efficiencies that can be achieved,” Mr Metcalf said.

Brighton Council General Manager Ron Sanderson said Microwise was marketing the three software packages in partnership with Assetic and Xero.

“Councils throughout Australia and as far afield as Fiji are using Propertywise, and Assetic software is already employed by more than 100 councils and local authorities. Xero has up to 30,000 clients in Australia and more than 200,000 users in 100 countries around the world,” Mr Sanderson said.

“Brighton will be switching to Xero next financial year and Tasman Council is also planning to use it. We are aware of a number of other councils that will be employing the complete Local Government package,” he said. “Combined, Xero, Propertywise and the Assetic asset management package is all the software councils need to run their operations and the savings are enormous. With the constant demand for savings and efficiencies, councils cannot afford to ignore this,” Mr Sanderson said.
Connect IT

The Circular Head and Waratah-Wynyard Councils are taking a combined approach to becoming paperless organisations.

Circular Head Council was the first of the two councils to roll out iPads to its councillors as part of the joint initiative called Connect IT. As part of the roll out, councillors are now given an electronic version of the agenda which they can browse and edit via an app.

General Manager Greg Winton said Connect IT was about using technology in an innovative way, while also being environmentally conscious. “Connect IT is really a further development of the resource sharing arrangement with Waratah-Wynyard Council, which is all about building stronger and better councils,” Mr Winton said.

“Innovation through the use of technology is just one of the many ways both councils can further strengthen each organisation.”

Both councils have also implemented a Councillors Intranet which is now being used to complement to the program. “By being able to centralise all communications, both organisations are able to provide real time updates on a range of matters to councillors,” Mr Winton said. “There will be many more exciting developments to come out of this initiative, so watch this space.”

Use of other technology, such as social media, video conferencing, smart phones and QR codes is either in use, or under development.

Regional Socio-economic Data Now Available

A range of social and economic data to assist Local Government planning across Tasmania is now available online. The data provides insightful, region-specific information relating to employment, education, the local economy, population growth, income, housing and internet connectivity. The data is presented across Australia’s 55 Regional Development Australia boundaries, making it easier to access regional information in one central location. The data will assist Local Government and communities across the State to better understand regional circumstances and to support planning and development. Find data about your region at myregion.gov.au.

Text to Speech for Your Website

Make your website content available to those who find it difficult to read online content. BrowseAloud... look, click, listen.

David Sutton Consulting
p: (08) 8274 1817
www.davidsuttonconsulting.com.au
browsealoud@davidsuttonconsulting.com.au