



## Improving customer service on a budget

As citizens place increasing demands on local governments, IT departments face continual challenges to improve service levels with only static or diminishing budgets. Customers and local businesses want easier access to council information and services with simpler processes, less paperwork and fewer interactions. To achieve this, Australian councils are deploying solutions that enable their staff to seamlessly integrate new customer service options into their work practices, while at the same time reducing duplication of tasks.

### Get 'one view' of your customers

At Bega Valley Shire Council, staff store all customer correspondence in and out on their Microsoft<sup>®</sup> SQL Server<sup>™</sup> 2000, which integrates with their desktop software to give every staff member a one council view when dealing with customer queries. They can see all previous interactions and correspondence, which provides continuity – so it doesn't matter if the staff member who dealt with the customer previously isn't available. The customer will still get consistent, well informed service.

**"One council View has really improved our service. And it's made us way more efficient. We're not constantly having to look through files or trying to decipher someone else's notes – it's all here at the click of a mouse."**

*Ron Dale, CIO, Bega Valley Shire Council*

### Deliver customer services online

A consistent, integrated end-to-end Microsoft platform has allowed the Mid-Western Regional Council to provide public services online. Their Web site provides daily updates on roadworks, environmental services such as weed control, landcare and water and sewage information. This can be published by staff intuitively as they work using Microsoft<sup>®</sup> Exchange Server 2003 and Microsoft<sup>®</sup> Windows Server<sup>™</sup> 2003.

Council also offers online development approvals and rate payments which integrate seamlessly into their Microsoft network systems, making them easy to manage from an internal IT perspective.

**"Online services are greatly appreciated as people no longer need to visit in person to interact with the council, saving them the time, costs and the inconvenience of travel – an important consideration in remote areas."**

*Andrew Sutherland, IT Manager, Mid-Western Regional Council*

### Provide smarter library services

Marrickville Council is using Microsoft technology at its libraries to power the Internet terminals and kiosks freely available to residents. They have also implemented RFID technology so that borrowers can check out books and CDs themselves. RFID tags are inserted into the books and CDs and as a customer walks towards the self-check out area, the RFID tags are scanned and the server information is updated. If a lender leaves without self-checking the items out, an alarm is sounded.

**"These kinds of solutions represent real cost savings to the community and provide better customer service."**

*Troy Green, Manager, Information Systems, Marrickville Council*

### Allow residents to book and pay for facilities online

Microsoft technologies allow residents in Snowy River Council to book online facilities such as sports fields for school carnivals and town halls for amateur productions. Reservations are managed in TRIM using Microsoft<sup>®</sup> SQL Server<sup>™</sup> 2000 which processes the information to the relevant areas; for example managing payment of rates in FinanceOne, updating reports when payment is received.

**"With our end-to-end Microsoft environment, the council has been able to deliver continual improvements in customer service by simply adding new functionality to our existing system."**

*Matthew O'Sullivan, ICT Manager, Snowy River Council*

### Stream Council meetings securely

To improve their service to the public, The City of Redmond, Washington, streams videos of town meetings. To protect their network, they installed Microsoft<sup>®</sup> Windows Server<sup>™</sup> 2003, Standard Edition with Service Pack 1 (SP1).

**"With SP1, we benefit from a more stable, more secure and more mature product. That frees our IT staff for higher-end IT projects that we didn't have time to do before."**

*Peter Chang, Network System Engineer, City of Redmond*

