



CASE STUDY



CUSTOMER PROFILE

The City of Ballarat, located at the foothills of the Great Dividing Range in Central Western Victoria, is a cultural tourist destination with a rich architectural heritage from the Victorian gold rush. The City encompasses an area of 740 km² with a population around 97,000.

Executive summary

The City of Ballarat council needed to extend their asset management solution to manage all council assets but also help capital works planning. An important factor was enabling staff to easily record issues directly in the field and route jobs to the best field staff for prompt action. Acquiring a complete historical summary of assets and referencing material such as inspection details, and photographs are also essential when updating information in the field.

Council implemented the ConfirmConnect solution from Pitney Bowes, now allowing field staff to perform effective asset management tasks out in the field in real-time.

Business challenge

In the past few years, the Council has focused on planned field based inspections of council assets. Although routine, this approach did not provide the level of responsiveness the community desired. There were also procedural difficulties encountered such as data upload and download processes, which required staff to stringently check into the depot each day. The Council identified these and many more issues could easily be resolved by adopting a more dynamic approach to live in-field asset maintenance.

Through the implementation of a live, field asset maintenance solution the City of Ballarat was aiming to improve:

- Operation and process efficiencies.
- Communication to end field staff.
- Allocation of resources and ability to manage jobs.
- Accountability amongst contractors.
- Risk management.
- Service to the community.

Solution

The City of Ballarat was already using the Pitney Bowes Confirm solution for enterprise asset management. The ConfirmConnect solution is designed to enable field staff to manage and maintain asset information in the field. The technology facilitates cost effective tablet hardware to provide a field operator with powerful enquiry and update functionality, using live asset information. The solution was implemented within 3 months and first deployed on tablet devices to field staff within the Arborist Team.

Running on a smart device greatly assisted with quick adoption of the technology as field staff were able to update asset records immediately with limited computer literacy. The asset database is updated automatically with maintenance activities recorded in the field. This removed the overhead associated with maintaining large datasets with various field updates and ensuring an up-to-date single point of truth across all systems, including GIS (Geographic Information System) and IAMS (Internet Access Management System).

“The system is intuitive enabling staff to quickly understand how to use the system. They are enthusiastic and have immediately been able to see the benefits of using the tablet in field to update jobs.”

Ben Howell
Coordinator Asset
Management,
City of Ballarat.

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“We can very quickly and very cost effectively equip large field teams. Being easy to use, staff are approaching us wanting to use the system.” Said Ben Howell, Coordinator Asset Management, City of Ballarat.

The solution is map driven so users can visualise the tasks and record the location of issues and work in the field. This approach also enables field users to access other tasks and decide to assume responsibility to action there and then. This provides the opportunity for considerable cost savings, particularly in rural areas with long distances between jobs. The technology also caters for limited device connectivity. It will log all work on the device until a clear data signal is re-established for data updates to be resumed back to the Council asset database.

The Council has been able to better manage risk and decrease liability costs by improved record keeping and live updates to assets. Utility contractors are held accountable by Council for projects that they undertake such as installation of new assets like water pipes, cables or a pavement which has been dug up and replaced. In the past 12 months, 700 defects have been recorded by inspectors who have been able to hold utility providers accountable for work that has taken place, allowing the Council to pass on liability.

“We are now able to keep track of the number of jobs that have been completed on a daily/weekly/monthly basis, which we did not have the capability to do previously.” Said Howell.

The mobility of the solution has enabled the Arborist team to change their work process in regards to allocation and planning. A proactive Arbour inspector is now able to assess trees based on risk and then remove those trees on an emergency basis thus mitigating potential risk.

Next Steps

The City of Ballarat plans to continue to expand the use of the ConfirmConnect solution to other areas of the Council.

“We have been so pleased with the implementation and enthusiasm from the Arbour department that we are looking to roll it out to the recreation, road operations and maintenance crews.” said Howell.

TECHNOLOGY USED

The solution implemented by Ballarat City Council included:

- Confirm.
- ConfirmConnect.

“The implementation of ConfirmConnect has been a success, allowing us to see significant efficiencies in field operation processes and job completion.”

Eric Braslis
General Manager,
City Infrastructure,
City of Ballarat

Results and benefits

Implementing the ConfirmConnect solution has enabled Ballarat City Council to achieve the following gains:

Maximised time spent by field staff in the field with no need for return to base.

Established dynamic monitoring and allocation of jobs.

Improved record keeping as data can be spatially and visually recorded, live.

A significant reduction in liabilities and premiums as an audit trail on asset inspections and maintenance is now recorded in real-time with photographic evidence.

Work can be performed more quickly with field coordination, which provides a better service to the community.

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