

PUBLIC SECTOR CASE STUDY

City of Casey

“THE FLEXIBILITY AND POWER OF ANYSITE GIVES US ENORMOUS SCOPE TO CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF CALM WELL BEYOND WHAT WE HAD INITIALLY ANTICIPATED WHEN WE STARTED THE PROJECT.”

Jem Belcher, Team Leader for Community Safety, City of Casey



THE CITY OF CASEY COUNCIL USES ANYSITE AUSTRALIA'S POTENTIAL TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SOLUTION.

Challenge

Victoria's City of Casey Council required a platform on which it could build an intuitive and easily used mapping system that would spatially locate vulnerable community groups within the municipality during times of emergency.

Solution

Using Pitney Bowes Software's AnySite Australia, and with a grant from Emergency Management Australia, the Council was able to develop its Casey Alert Location Manager (CALM) system.

SUMMARY

With more than 235,000 residents, the City of Casey is the largest and one of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria. It's therefore hardly surprising that the City of Casey has extensive emergency management recovery infrastructure. In early 2008, that infrastructure was given a major boost with the formal launch of CALM – the Casey Alert Location Manager system.

The system was conceptually conceived in 2005 by a working party consisting of staff from Casey's Community Safety and IT Departments. City of Casey Team Leader Community Safety, Jem Belcher explains, “The concept was to develop a computer-based system that would enable us to identify specific locations where vulnerable community groups, facilities, and other service related infrastructure might be at risk during an emergency.”

The idea almost immediately resulted in a groundswell of support, leading to a grant from Emergency Management Australia to fund development of the spatial mapping-based system. So in 2006, in partnership with Pitney Bowes Software, the City of Casey set out to develop CALM using AnySite Australia.

In commenting on the decision to use AnySite Australia as the platform for CALM, Mr Belcher says, “We recognised AnySite as a solid and small footprint platform that can be readily adapted to almost any solution where rapid and easy mapping and spatial location activities need to be carried out. Another major advantage of AnySite is data. Along with the fact that it connects to utilise any

database, it includes the comprehensive ABS [Australian Bureau of Statistics] Census data.”

Adding further to the AnySite value proposition for the CALM developers is its out-of-the-box functionality. Incorporating features such as streets and roads, geocoder and drive-time engine, the product is seen as an ideal platform on which to develop custom solutions.

QUICK REACTION TIMES

In emergency situations, time – or the lack of time, to be more precise – is one of the most critical challenges facing emergency services. “It's absolutely vital that when an emergency occurs, we're in the position of being able to provide emergency services personnel with information about people and community groups at risk as quickly as possible,” Mr Belcher explains. “If, for example, a fire breaks out in bushland, emergency services need to be told if there are kindergartens, schools, hospitals, aged care facilities or any other location at which efforts must be made to save lives and property.”

“There might also be situations where chemical spills occur,” Mr Belcher continues. “In those cases, we need to see immediately where it may impact on our stormwater draining and sewerage systems. These, and an almost limitless number of other scenarios, are precisely where AnySite and CALM come into their own.”

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“Once we identify the location and immediate boundaries of the emergency, we can introduce overlays that superimpose specific information on the displayed map. In the case of a chemical spill, we can overlay the sewerage and stormwater system. We can just as easily introduce an overlay that shows all the schools or anything else that we’ve incorporated in the database.”

According to Mr Belcher, a key feature and major benefit of AnySite Australia is its ability to utilise text and graphics to represent specific entities. Rather than being presented with a screen full of text during an emergency, the CALM operator can opt for an icon style display. “It’s a case of a picture being worth a thousand words,” Mr Belcher says. “At a glance, we can see schools, kindergartens, hospitals, anything we have included in the database as an icon, which can be clicked on for more information.”

While the on-screen display provides the CALM operator with a clear and accurate view of an emergency area and those entities that fall within its boundaries, the system has been designed also to take advantage of the AnySite site-based analysis and reporting capabilities. The result is an ability to generate reports detailing vulnerable community groups that may need assistance from emergency services personnel. Very quickly, the operator can generate reports that include specific locations, contact names, phone numbers and even the location of the nearest fire hydrants and evacuation centres.

Of particular interest is the fact that the AnySite-based CALM system is installed on a ruggedised laptop computer. “When an emergency occurs, we’re able to use the system totally independent of the network,” Mr Belcher explains. “This is an absolute must when you’re considering a system that has

been developed specifically to take in worst case scenarios. It also ensures we can take the system with us to the emergency response centre and provide information immediately to police, fire services, SES and all the other services represented in the centre.”

JUST THE STARTING POINT

One of the challenges in a large community is communicating with people who may have English as a second or even tertiary language. This is particularly prevalent where groups of similar ethnicity form almost sub-communities. Plans are already in discussion to liaise with these communities in order to create additional AnySite layers that identify the location of individuals, such as elders, translators and community liaison personnel.

“This can save the emergency services enormous amounts of time,” Mr Belcher says. “Instead of having to deal with language barriers and large numbers of people, we can identify individuals who can be contacted and relied upon to work with emergency services to liaise with their own groups. Essentially, it’s this level of functionality that can be incorporated within CALM to save time, effort and quite possibly lives.

“What we have achieved now is only the starting point,” Mr Belcher says. “CALM is without doubt the way of the future for spatially mapping vulnerable community groups within Casey in times of an emergency, and for providing critical emergency response information on these groups to emergency services out in the field during these times. The flexibility and power of AnySite Australia gives us enormous scope to continue development of CALM well beyond what we had initially anticipated when we started the project”, concluded Mr Belcher.