

Cloud Fees & Charges Case Study - Swan Hill Rural City Council & LG Solutions

Warren Snyder is Finance Manager at Swan Hill Rural City Council.

Q - Can you tell us what system or tool you were using to prepare your Fees & Charges?

Warren – Prior to moving to LG Solutions Council used an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was developed within Council and maintained by one Finance Officer.

Q- What was it about the previous process & tool that prompted you to look for a replacement?

Warren – Information for the spreadsheet was collected from individual departments and entered into the spreadsheet by a single Finance Officer. The collection and collation of relevant information was an onerous and time consuming process.

Council was also seeking a clear and easy to understand Fees & Charges report to present to Council and upload onto Council's website. Having fee owners assigned has improved the reliability of the schedule, and having the item approved by the respective manager and director further adding to its completeness.

Q – When you decided to make the change, were there a few non-negotiable features you were looking for?

Warren – Council was looking to implement a systematic process for review of Fees & Charges, whilst increasing accuracy and providing clear and concise reports for staff to use and for user (customer) reference.

The ability to forecast fees and extrapolate income for budget purposes was also a strong focus. The latter feature of the software is still to be embedded in our processes.

Q – Were there any feature/s of the LG Solutions Fees & Charges that swayed Council to select & implement it?

Warren – Council's main motivation to move to the LGS platform was the ability to have Fees & Charges reviewed and approved at the appropriate levels, along with the GST audit feature and the clear and concise reporting.

The LGS platform enables Fees & Charges to be allocated to review officers for updating, which increased accountability in relevant departments. The ability to allocate fees and charges to a review officer has also increased accuracy, as the fee/charge is set by the person with the best available information. Council has also opted for the GST AddIn audit feature which helps to ensure accurate treatment for GST against ATO tax rulings for our State.

Q - Did you find the implementation process was well set out, manageable & supported?

Warren – Yes, the implementation was well set out and easily managed. Due to our fee hierarchy and volume of fees and charges, we found the implementation process to be time consuming, but we can already see efficiency gains. The implementation was very well supported with queries being answered on the same business day.

The Audit & Risk Committee and Councillors have reviewed the Schedule of Fees & Charges and are pleased with the ease of use, formatting and data presented.

Q – Now that the implementation is complete, do you find the system & process simpler & more efficient than the previous fee setting process?

Warren – Council is in the second year of using the LGS platform and we have found the review and fee setting process to be far more efficient than our previous process. The efficiency gains are primarily due to review officers setting their own fees/charges and the ability of an approval officer to provide the final approval. Finance staff find using and setting the parameters in the background easy and rewarding to use.

Q – Has LGS Fees & Charges improved the process of preparing council’s Fees & Charges schedule?

Warren – The process of reviewing Council’s Fees & Charges has improved to now being more targeted, systematic and accurate.

Prior to issuing Fees & Charges to review officers, Finance is now able to automatically increase fees by a set percentage and apply rounding. Fees & Charges are now reviewed by the relevant department, which not only increases accuracy, but is less onerous on Finance to gather the information. The ‘Queries Fee Status’ feature, enables Finance to check on the progress of fees and charges as they are being reviewed and approved.

Q – Do the system outputs provide Council the required information?

Warren – The system outputs most frequently used by Council are the Queries Fee Status to determine the status of all fees and charges at any given point in time and the customizable reports. Council finds the reports to be clear and easy to understand for both internal and external users.

Other Outputs used:

- Export of fees by program
- My Fees filter by program, review officer or status
- Audit Log

Q – Lastly, are you glad that Council made the move to implement the LGS Cloud Fees & Charges?

Warren – Yes, Council has realized improvements in processing time, accuracy and reporting of our fees and charges. The product and ongoing support has not disappointed us and we look forward to using more of the existing features in the future.