

GLADSTONE REGIONAL COUNCIL CASE STUDY



Why Gladstone Regional Council played it safe and improved their bottom line in the process.

Gladstone Regional Council [GRC] has achieved stunning results by taking a proactive approach to safety with the help of IMS software. In the first nine months since go live, the Council has a reported bottom line improvement of \$250,000 from the strategic initiatives implemented in 2013 – 2014. It is estimated a further \$200,000 has been saved in on-costs in addition to the reductions in reported statutory claims.



Gladstone City Beach

Beautiful one day, safer the next.

The Gladstone region in Queensland is home to 65,000 people, the Southern Great Barrier Reef and two of the world's largest alumina refineries, Queensland's largest multi commodity port and a number of other major industrial giants.

Council employs 750 people and wanted to improve their safety management performance but was unsure which way to go. Craig Cousar, OH&S Coordinator for Gladstone Regional Council wanted to upgrade councils systems and align them to Australian standards and go from a paper based system to a real-time, electronic reporting environment.

"We had no succinct way to measure, trend and analyse our data, and it could take weeks before we understood what had happened, so we needed to start a continuous improvement journey," he said.

We were using paper based forms, with data then having to be transcribed into excel spreadsheets where you could spend weeks trying to find a hot spot," he said.

Power to respond

The Manager of People and Performance, Chris Phillips, saw the organisation was still suffering from post-amalgamation in regards to a quality safety management system and that there were potential gaps in comparison to the evolving acts.

“The old ways of dealing with safety were getting tired and weren’t actually working any more, we needed to change our thinking around safety and had a clear charter from our CEO to create a safety culture,” he said.

“The key to the success has been the engagement of the organization, and it was not just one things that fixed everything...part of whole suite that said the organization was serious about safety, cared about safety and we were going to invest in safety,”

“Because our previous system wasn’t in real time, there was little accountability, as it was all done retrospectively, presenting little opportunity to do any trend analysis.

“We can now see trends we don’t like and have been able to intervene faster, with great impact and positive results” he said.

Chris outlined that the appeal of the IMS safety system was that it aligned with GRC’s obligation to make their workplaces as safe as possible, which helped with the executive level discussion.

“Our real motivation came from the realisation that we are all managers of safety and therefore all accountable, and it would be unfair of us not to have something in place to make our teams workplaces safer,” he said.

As an OH&S Manager, GRC’s Craig Cousar knew from experience that for every day someone has off work, it costs council up to three times that wage. He wanted to find out quicker what type of injuries were happening, where they were happening and their frequency.

“The IMS system helps us plug those gaps and became the vessel that gave us the data and information to launch and redefine our policy and corporate standards framework, bringing them in line with Australian Standards,” he said.

“Once you’ve set reports up it’s a click of a button to get meaningful data showing you the key risk areas, we were able to pull that data efficiently...”

“Our biggest area of opportunity was the combination of lost days and claims and we are now able to tell which

departments were having the most lost days, what types of roles they perform, and drill down to see what is going on,”

“We had a common theme with back injuries and we wanted to improve that so were able to spend time looking at a range of programs including mechanical, ergonomic, onsite physiotherapists, helping making our guys fitter,”

“IMS was able to give us that hotspot quicker, without weeks of trawling through data to decipher how to improve our workplace.”



Tell it like it is – IMS delivers

IMS was ordered in April 2013 and once the system was configured, tested and staff trained, a go live on July 1, 2013 was achieved. Gladstone Regional Council were able to fast track the process with IMS, due to their senior leader’s familiarity with IMS Worksafe Management Systems which powers IMS.

Craig Cousar from GRC explained, “Our outside workforce really like the system and find it easy to use. With no paperwork, they can log an incident from an iPhone or iPad, or once back in the office through a simple set up around seven or eight questions that anyone can fill it out,”

“We were conscious to make it easy to use for a range of literacy levels are tailor to both white collar, blue collar and casual staff,” he continued.

Safety first, savings forever.

The results for the 9 months have been nothing less than outstanding.

A combination of system implementation, and strategic resolve to change behaviours and process to managing risk, incidents, return to work, and safety management has resulted in a significant cost reduction and bottom line improvement for GRC well ahead of expected timelines.

As at May 2014, GRC has achieved:

- **A gross reduction in Statutory Claims of approximately \$405,000 on the previous year's results of \$470,000.**
- **a net improvement versus the previous year is \$255,000 after costs of all initiatives, including the purchase of IMS.**
- **Lost time days in 2012- 2013 were approximately 1000, and in the current year are only 160, year to date.**
- **Reduction of insurance premium in next financial year of \$80,000 with further reductions expected in next two to three years.7.5% reduction**

In addition to the reportable reductions in costs, it is estimated that a further 50% of on costs has also been saved, estimated at over \$200,000.

"International companies appreciate the world class handle we have on safety and environment in Gladstone," he said.

Chris Phillips

Manager of People and Safety
Gladstone Regional Council



Triple bottom line

With the balance Gladstone Regional Council must achieve amongst its diverse local stakeholders, IMS suggested an Environment Management System [EMS] would be a necessary partner to their safety approach. GRC assisted with the development of the EMS, so it is relevant and tested in a highly industrial region making it world class. Craig Cousar explains that it was a natural progression for Gladstone Regional Council's to evolve IMS for their regulatory services department.

While our CEO and Mayor are impressed with the results so far, Craig's ultimate goal is the long term reduction in the insurance premium,

"While we get an initial reduction which we have been able to save, it's the size of the reduction of the three year period where we will see the real improvement," he said.

We're all in this together

As GRC's stakeholder environment is volatile due to the peaks and troughs of the local industry, Chris Phillips believes GRC provides a stable core that shows the way through leadership and civic responsibility.

"We will never be able to match the dollars that industry offers here, but with 750 employees, we believe they are all advocates of Gladstone Regional Council and understand that we care about the safety of everyone in our region," he said.

"If our staff are not at work, or something happens, we will get them back into the workforce as quick as possible, which has a positive impact on engagement, morale and makes us an employer of choice locally,"

"We know that the longer someone stays at home the harder it is to re-enter the workforce after injury so we have a plan for them to get them back into work, and engaged in their recovery." he said.

"We can't fault the service, from a technical and business support perspective. Any question or idea, no matter how far-fetched it might seem we gave to the IMS technical guys as we believe it not only benefits us and IMS but all future customers as well." He said.

The future is in the palm of your hand

As well as the current solution suite within IMS, standalone applications for smart devices are available and will continue to be developed to meet client needs.

The Reporting Module is yet to be fully leveraged. It has immense power. It is effectively a full BI system overlaying the Safety System. In the USA, it is used in Local Government across whole of council.

It can schedule reporting, deploy dashboards relevant to a department, and can provide complex modelling and forecasting scenarios. It really does put the power in the executive team's hands.