



At a glance

Industry
Utility

Solution

- QlikView Business Intelligence
- Microsoft Dynamics GP

Business Benefits

- A 30% decrease in time required to generate monthly Board reports
- Similar reductions in time to prepare quarterly and annual compliance reports
- Management has easier access to KPIs
- Clarity of information
- Reduction in repetitive tasks, leading to improved staff morale
- Ability to scale and cater for increasing demand due to growing connection and customer numbers

Utility keeps an eye on water and service quality with QlikView

Central Highlands Water (CHW) is one of 19 regional water corporations in Victoria. It provides high quality drinking water and sewerage services to 130,000 customers and trade waste and recycled water in Ballarat and surrounding towns.

The organisation manages a range of water sources including 30 reservoirs, 13 weirs and more than 30 bores. It is responsible for 62,000 water supply connections, close to 53,000 waste water connections, and property, infrastructure, plant and equipment valued at \$879 million.

CHW is led by a government-appointed minister and board of directors. Together, they steer the organisation, set objectives and performance targets, and ensure compliance with legislation and government policies.

Monitoring with metrics

Every month the CHW Board receives information about the organisation's performance. Of critical importance are key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to areas such as the

number of interruptions to water supply, average duration of unplanned interruptions, speed of service restoration, reliability of sewerage collection services, containment of sewerage spills and customer service.

Until recently many of the KPIs were prepared using a combination of spreadsheets and a six year old analytics application. Although the approach worked, it took time to gather data from multiple business systems and to generate the reports. To make it more difficult, the business had largely reached the functional limitations of its analytics software.

"It wasn't until we started to feed our own data in and started playing around with it, that we saw just how much we could improve visibility across varied aspects of the business. It was a bit of an eye opener in that regard."





In 2012, management decided it was time to seek a new analytics software solution, one that could easily draw information from the core business systems including their Microsoft Dynamics GP financial system and their water quality program management system called WIMS (Water Information Management System).

Their previous approach wasn't successful due to having deeply entrenched excel spreadsheets which were developed by staff members that no longer worked in the company. They needed an agile approach, with a system that was flexible enough to tease out bit by bit the various measures and results which were buried deep in complex formula.

CHW project manager, Darren Fox explains, "We knew there had to be a better way of doing things to achieve what we required. Something easier, quicker and with better functionality. Our goal was to get information into the hands of our Board members. They had 22 different high level KPIs to monitor. Deriving that information required hundreds of calculations. What we wanted was the information put into a summary form that could be easily viewed and understood, or drilled into for more detailed information," Fox adds.

CHW management wanted to automate the quarterly and annual reporting required for Victoria's independent economic regulator the Essential Services Commission. (ESC)

A good relationship helps

On the advice of IT partner, Professional Advantage, CHW decided to adopt QlikView, a fully-featured business intelligence solution with the benefit of seamless integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP.

"QlikView was a totally new product for us, but we already had a successful relationship in place with Professional Advantage.

They knew our business well and we knew them. They understood our environment and that was quite important." The project to deploy QlikView and build the necessary reports began in December 2012, and it didn't take long for Central Highlands Water to see what QlikView was capable of. Within weeks we were seeing results and also uncovering vulnerabilities in some excel calculations. "We'd been running with the same system for over six years so the decision to change gave us an opportunity to review our processes, to see if there was anything we should or could improve."

"As we got to know QlikView and saw its capabilities, we also realised its greater potential. The ease that anyone can go in, click away and drill down on facts and figures is very powerful."

By June 2013 integration with all major CHW systems had occurred. Dynamic QlikView applications were being generated across core operational areas such as waste management, water quality, assets management and the phone system. General Managers were given an opportunity to fine-tune report designs to suit the information needs of their own business units, and the data prepared for Board reports was ready to be unveiled at the start of the new financial year.

Monthly time savings

Quarterly and annual compliance reports are now far more easily prepared for the state government. Preparation and review time for reports has decreased, leading to faster production times. Early tests with the Board reports show similar benefits, to the extent that Fox predicts CHW will be able to save two-to-three days of production time each and every month.



"The key benefits of QlikView for us are speed and ease of reporting. We're achieving a 30% decrease in real terms to get reports generated each month."

"Because the system pulls data directly from Microsoft Dynamics GP, it frees people up from repetitive work. People obviously still do checks to ensure things balance, but it has definitely helped save time and effort."

The easy access to data is also being used to keep CHW management more informed, with a tailored version of the ESC's report being generated and distributed to the senior management team at the end of every month.

Equipped for growth

The VIC population served by CHW is growing at a steady pace with new estates opening up on a regular basis. This gives added impetus to the monthly review of KPIs, beyond the Board requirements, as the organisation needs to keep a close eye on demand, customer and connection metrics.

"The system has created very great interest at the general management level. Even though we are only just starting to use it, everyone can see there are definite advantages. They like the way it presents data. Visually, you can focus on the higher level information without getting lost in all the other data. You can also click on numbers and drill down into them, to see what a figure is made up of. That's where the power and value of the system lies," Fox asserts.

He believes the relationship with Professional Advantage has definitely helped to ensure an analytics system that is delivering true insight into operations. "They understand us and our environment. This made the project very efficient because they didn't need to go through a learning curve. The consultant also knew a lot of people here, so we've had the benefit of that personal connection as well.

"QlikView is pretty vital to us really, because it will allow us to meet our requirements more quickly, especially in relation to state government reporting, and it gives us a much more efficient way of delivering our reports in terms of time and effort."





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About Professional Advantage

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Contact us



1800 126 499



www.pa.com.au



enquiries@pa.com.au

