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CASE STUDY

New South Wales Parliament House

Project: To implement a bespoke facilities management software solution to manage maintenance for the Parliament of New South Wales' Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).

Objectives: To streamline maintenance services and to increase transparency and accountability in public spending for the DPS Facilities Branch.

Results: Enhanced service delivery and scheduling, increased transparency for end-users, centralised information, enhanced reporting capability, and insight into future FM resourcing requirements.

Serving the Parliament of New South Wales

The Parliament of New South Wales, Australia's first and oldest parliament, has occupied the Macquarie Street site in Sydney since 1829. Parliament House, which is recognised for its significant heritage, is the meeting place of the two Houses of the Parliament of New South Wales (NSW). The Legislative Council was established in 1824 and the Legislative Assembly in 1843.

Parliament House, originally built as the Chief Surgeon's quarters, was given to the government in 1829 for the purpose of a parliament chamber. This chamber was added to, following the growth of the legislature in 1843, and again in 1856. The last major renovations to the building were carried out from 1974 to 1985. This replaced a jumble of buildings with a 12-story block linked by a fountain court to the original Parliament House, which was restored to its 1908 appearance.

Set against a rich historic background, the DPS specialist service department supports the operation of the NSW Parliament, providing logistical support and advice to Members of Parliament, the Departments of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly and the people of New South Wales.

Within the department, which comprises Information Services, Finance and Members' Services, Parliamentary Catering and People and Engagement, the Parliamentary Facilities Team supports the maintenance and development of the parliamentary buildings and precinct.

Meeting 21st century challenges

The Infrastructure and Building Services team is responsible for maintaining the present mix of heritage and contemporary buildings (ranging from one of Australia's oldest buildings to a modern tower) to ensure they meet the needs of a working parliament. It must meet the challenge of providing the highest standards for housing the Members and hosting meetings, public visits, and corporate events. The facility is continually evolving in a way that could never have been envisaged when the original building was constructed 200 years ago.

Parliament consists of a lower house, the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, and an upper house, the New South Wales Legislative Council. There is an office for each Member of Parliament. The 93 Members of the lower house spend around 50 days each year in Chambers attending debates, while the 48 Members of the upper house carry out a full time role with their staff, and have full-time use of the building.

Optimising service delivery

Brett Wright, Infrastructure and Building Services Manager, has worked at Parliament House for more than 30 years. He introduced Service Works Global's QFM facilities management software five years ago to replace an Access database, with a view to "bringing the organisation into the 21st Century."

The irregular and ad hoc use of the facilities needs to be managed through varied and flexible maintenance scheduling cycles, including weekly, monthly and yearly routine schedules. QFM facilitates this flexibility for the engineering team of seven (including the administration support staff) and the 35-strong cleaning team who service the common area and Members' rooms.

Previously, maintenance requests were raised by telephone call or an email, and jobs were issued to the team through a paper-based system. QFM software has streamlined the job-logging process, creating efficiencies and reducing the risk of failed calls.

QFM is integrated into the human resources database, enabling everyone who uses the building to raise a building maintenance request from their own desk through the intranet. Users select from a range of dropdown boxes, including mechanical, cleaning, electrical, air conditioning and security, and the work request is automatically emailed to relevant team members. Each team member receives jobs through a PDA, which enables them to pick up work requests while on the move and reduces the time it takes to carry out tasks.

Wright manages a full-time maintenance and cleaning team, which is one of the few in-house teams left in typical commercial and government buildings in the Sydney Central Business District. His department is also responsible for security and a large central plant that provides air cooling and heating. The central plant pumps water to the government buildings on either side of Parliament House, the NSW State Library, Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital.

The QFM system supports the scheduled and routine maintenance and replacement of water meters, as well as creating maintenance alerts with a warning flag. This underpins efficiency and helps with billing accuracy for the service; the cost of which is divided among the three organisations.

Optimising service delivery

Service Works Global was able to offer QFM to the DPS Infrastructure and Building Services as a flexible, bespoke solution to meet their unique requirements and attract the best user and staff buy-in. Many of the off-the-shelf FM software solutions either didn't exhibit the required flexibility for an organisation of this size or were cost-prohibitive.

Creating transparency

The QFM system provides real-time work monitoring so that the client can see the progress and priority of the job and it supports the culture of the organisation where users are personally updated on any issues or potential delays.QFM has given a clear insight into work processes, creating leaner working methods and staffing efficiencies, and adding value for public spending.

Wright identifies a major benefit of the FM software in the enhanced reporting:

We now have critical data for the auditors to demonstrate value for money and provide evidence that we are fulfilling our charter obligation to maintain the building."

Future Focus

The real value of QFM software is demonstrated by the department's name for the bespoke system, FAMs – Facilities Asset Management system. Two of the major challenges for the future are 1) maintaining and 2) renovating Parliament House to retain the look and feel of a heritage building, while accurately forecasting costs for this work for the Treasury.

To meet latest security protocols, for example, the department needed to build a security gatehouse that met listed buildings regulations compliance, using heritage architects and replicating many of the building methods of 200 years ago. Parliament House is fronted by a steel picket fence where security can be compromised by people putting items through.

The only effective and acceptable solution for added protection was installing an analytical camera to detect movement. In the light of such huge capital costs, it is estimated that asset maintenance must support the newest building to achieve an 80 plus year life-span. Effective and efficient maintenance through the QFM/FAM system will be key to making this happen.

QFM has helped the DPS to provide a quality maintenance service for the Members and has the flexibility to meet the unique requirements of the organisation. Its user-friendly interface enables jobs to be logged easily and responded to extremely quickly by the Facilities team. The centralised information and enhanced reporting capability of the software provides transparency for end-users and insight into future FM resource requirements to meet the organisation's commercial, budgetary and auditing challenges.