

**(SLIDE 1)**

1. Firstly I'd like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the land we are on today and thank them for having me. My name is Katie Handford; I'm from Queensland South Native Title Services. Today, I'm talking to you about our Knowledge Management Project.
2. **(SLIDE 2)** Before I get into to it, I'd like to flag that in no way am I an expert on information management.
3. So under the notion of best practice, I'm hoping that by sharing QSNTS' experience in trying to create an effective knowledge management system, it will in some way benefit our collective efforts as service providers to better realise traditional owners aspirations through more effective service delivery.
4. **(SLIDE 3)** Over the last 12 months, Queensland South Native Title Services has seen some major changes. In July 2008, QSNTS' operational boundaries were expanded to cover over fifty per cent of Queensland, increasing the case load to approximately 59 client groups.
5. **(SLIDE 4) MAP 1:** service area prior to July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.
6. **(SLIDE 5) MAP 2:** current service area. This area includes approximately 59 different client groups.
7. As a result of the expansion staff were left with close to 300 boxes of documents relating to the claims we inherited. The overwhelming task of making sense of the inherited material led to the creation of the Archive Project
8. In October 2008, Grace Koch, AIATSIS Native Title Research Advisor and Access Officer visited QSNTS to assess the situation and propose the best way to deal with the material.

9. Grace suggested it would take approximately four staff, 12 months to sort through the material and prepare it for off-site storage.
10. The only issue with Grace's proposal- we didn't have 12 months.
11. As our service area expanded, so did our staff members. We outgrew our Wharf Street office space (slide). In February this year, we moved from our Wharf Street office to a new building in the CBD. While the rest of the staff moved, myself and the other archive officers remained with the 300 boxes of material at Wharf Street. This happened for two reasons, firstly, there was no room for the material at our new office, and secondly, as the lease at Wharf Street doesn't expire until June 30- it gave us time to properly synthesise the contents of the boxes and sort it for storage.
12. As for the actual content of the boxes, they contained legal files, corporate and administration files, general correspondence, future act notifications and a vast amount of research resources.
13. In January this year, the archive project formally kicked off, when the first archive officer was employed, Cass Venn. Shortly after I joined the project, which gave us just under 6 months to sort through the inherited material and get it archived off-site by June 30.
14. Within the first fortnight of our new role, we realised the overwhelming tasks that lay ahead, particularly with the looming deadline of June 30.
15. The existing filing system reflected the needs of a small and compact business. There was no official record management system, and information management was generally left to the discretion of staff. At the time of our operational expansion, QSNTS was not structured to incorporate; a) the increase in material b) the diversity of material, simply based on the fact we had tripled in size.

16. It was at this juncture, that in the hope of bringing greater services to Traditional Owners, the opportunity to create a legacy in terms of information management was realised.
17. In our second week of starting on the Archives project, Cass and I travelled to Canberra to undergo a crash course in archives and information management. It was during the training that we spoke to a range of highly qualified and experienced professionals who strongly recommended we engage an expert consultant to guide us.
18. After initial reports and discussions, it became apparent that due to the volatile funding environment and the general lack of 'corporate memory' across the Queensland native title service industry, this project presented the opportunity to remedy longstanding problems, and to create a leading benchmark for information management and succession planning.
19. Our CEO, Kevin Smith stressed that from a client and public value point of view, it was incumbent that we address the void in corporate memory and set in place mechanisms to ensure smoother transitions for possible succession in the future.
20. It was identified that the lack in business rules, practices and protocols around information management prevented us from establishing a tangible corporate memory- this is an important issue, that if resolved, reduces the strain on Traditional Owners. **If a rep body or service provider is unable transfer its information in a cohesive and comprehensible way, it's the Traditional Owners who suffer at the end of the day.**
21. **Recognising and understanding the important link between information management and an organisation being transparent, accountable and thorough**

**in its work was a vital transition moment for QSNTS in moving forward and moving towards best practice.**

22. I'll just pause here to explain briefly what knowledge management is so you get the complete picture.

- i. **(SLIDE 13)** Knowledge Management is a range of practices used by an organisation to **identify, create, represent, organise, distribute** and **enable insights, experiences** and **information** in a way that improves the operation of its staff and services. **It's under this premise that the Archive Project morphed into a Knowledge Management project.**

23. Two other key drivers for creating the best possible knowledge management system for QSNTS are, firstly making sure we are working in the most efficient and transparent way to maximise our services for Traditional Owners and in turn better represent them. **And secondly to prevent this situation from repeating itself, which we identified as very real risk simply due to the complexity and fluidity of the native title funding environment.**

- i. The main issues that became the objectives of the knowledge management project were: establishing records and information management policies to ensure; we are actively working towards building a corporate memory; safeguarding information and sharing information in a responsible and ethical manner.
- ii. We realised the best way to do this was to purchase an Electronic Document and Records Management System.
- iii. So for those of you who don't know, an eDRMS is one comprehensive system that manages all aspects of information for a business. Everything from

physical documents and folders at your desk, to digital documents, as well as archive boxes that are stored off our premises, at a separate location. **It's essentially one system that centralises all information and tracks its location.**

iv. This system had to have security and access functions that could be uniquely configured to ensure the safeguarding of confidential or restricted information

24. Because rep bodies are not a typical legal firm or government organisation, they operate in an environment where managing conflicts of interest are a very real part of their daily workings. One of the major tasks of the project was finding an eDRMS that was able to be customised to the way we operate.

25. The point of 'conflicts of interest' raised a lot questions around the configuring of our system.

26. Operationally, QSNTS works in discrete multi-disciplinary teams. Each team is assigned to a claim group and consists of a research, legal and community officer responsible for its carriage. This approach is put in place to create what we call "Chinese walls" between teams that are working on neighbouring claims. This is to avoid conflicts of interest among staff who work on claims that may have overlapping boundaries or shared apical ancestors. **This system allows our staff to practice ethically; remain conflict of interest free and be accountable and transparent to the Traditional Owners they represent.**

27. **We realised that whatever system we decided on, would have to be uniquely set up to ensure that we maintained this level of transparency and that when accessing information on the system, these Chinese walls between teams were left in tact.**

The second major factor that determined the scope of this project is our departmental requirements.

Organisationally, all staff work within one of the four departments. Communities, Research, Legal and Corporate. Within each of these departments there were unique operational requirements that also needed to be catered for by the eDRMS.

All of these organisational and operational requirements are the foundation of the knowledge management project and its objective to set up a system that allows our staff to work more effectively and efficiently, so at the end of the day, Traditional Owners are receiving services without delay and of high quality.

For example, in Communities an easily accessible and up-dateable contacts database is paramount to their role and the quality and efficiency of our services. **Maintaining up to date contact details of Traditional Owners and their community members for any service provider or rep body is inextricable from being able to deliver our functions and services.** So a system that provided this was extremely important.

Alternatively, the legal department needed to establish standardised naming conventions and filing across the department so documents could be easily located.

For research, a system that enabled them to search using multiple fields was vital. This would allow them to have greater access to resources through flexible searching options.

The corporate department requested action tracking functions, to enable staff to keep track of documents that required multiple people to contribute to them; ensuring tasks are completed on time and with the appropriate checks and balances.

**From these requests, it's not difficult to understand how important it was that we get a consultant and a system that is aware and supportive of our needs.**

Getting the system right is so vital in assisting our staff in their roles and responsibilities to Traditional Owners. **The end result of creating the best possible knowledge management system is enabling Traditional Owners to realise their aspirations through our better functioning.**

After much research and consideration, we decided on an eDRMS called TRIM. In short, this was the best system for our needs within our budget.

At present, we are in the midst of configuring TRIM's security settings to ensure that the "Chinese walls" remain in place between staff working on neighbouring claims. The system we are proposing consists of all information been stored in discrete client group containers. So within each client group container, there are sub folders where security is preset to either enable or deny staff access to the information. The subfolder structure allows us to preset the system so users aren't responsible for determining the security rights of documents; they are already pre-determined by the system.

Negotiating the importance of sharing information and making sure confidential material remains confidential has been a challenging task.

The structure we have come up with is as follows:

- **SLIDE**
- **(SLIDE)** Theoretically, the staff working on two neighbouring claims cannot access each others material.

At present, the consultant is working on the configuration of TRIM, negotiating these security settings.

The 300 boxes have been sorted and reduced and are scheduled to be collected on June 26 to be taken to the off-sit storage facility. Finalising the system and training staff occurs throughout July and in the first week of August TRIM is due to go live at the office.

In concluding, I'd just like to reiterate that this project has been and continues to be QSNTS' best effort to set-up a system and put in place business rules that make us a sounder, more transparent and

accountable Native Title Service Provider. This project has confronted and worked through many long standing problems. **The most important goal of this project has been creating system that enables better services to Traditional Owners. It has allowed us to put in place mechanisms that safeguard and protect their knowledge that is not only important and sacred in its own right, but so vital to achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' aspirations to their land and waters.** It's this motive that has and continues to guide QSNTS to work towards a knowledge management system that ethically and responsibly manages their knowledge and assists us to provide greater native title services.

Thank you.