

## YARRA RANGES COUNCIL



### The Challenge

Council had an overwhelming need to quickly find information across the organisation for FOI requests, customer requests and general business outcomes.

Their email archive was very large and information was stored in various locations in network drives and a variety of corporate systems.

### The Solution - iFerret

Providing a single search capability across key document repositories including Pathway and ECM ensuring that nothing can fall through the gaps when performing searches.

### The Benefits

There are now some 38 users of iFerret who undertake searches for FOI information, insurance discovery, governance, compliance, customer service.

Feedback from users has been very positive and the FOI discovery process has reduced previous search times by at least 50 percent.



### About Yarra Ranges Council

**Area** 2470 square kilometres

**Population** 150,000 plus

**Income** \$203m

\*annual report 16/17

**Expenditure** \$174m

\*annual report 16/17

Yarra Ranges is the 12th largest local government in Melbourne in terms of population and the largest in terms of geographic area. The Yarra Ranges Council area is located in Melbourne's outer east - between 30 and 110 kilometres east of the Melbourne CBD.

The Yarra Valley has local and international recognition for its fine food and wine producing area. Each year more than 4.5 million tourists visit the wineries of the Yarra Valley as well as the gardens and townships of the Dandenong Ranges.

### About iFerret

iFerret is an enterprise search product developed by iPLATINUM that works like "google" over your corporate information. iFerret enables you to find information, including detail residing in scanned documents, that may exist in a variety of corporate repositories including email systems, records systems, corporate systems and shared drives.

iFerret is now widely accepted in local government and installed at a large number of councils.

## YARRA RANGES TURNS THE KEY TO GET ITS SEARCH PRIORITIES CORRECT

Outlining the background to the implementation of iFerret, Yarra Ranges enterprise systems business analyst, Michelle Harris explains “we had an overwhelming need to find information for FOI requests, our email archive was very large and information was stored in various locations in network drives, rather than the corporate document management system.

“Each system we use - ECM, Pathway and Email Archive - has its own searching capabilities but we were after a single means of searching and collecting documentation and data in the one place,” she said.

One of the challenges confronting Yarra Ranges in configuring the machine on which iFerret would operate is the Council’s policy to keep all emails, such that its email archive is very big and slow to search.

So it commissioned iPLATINUM to supply a dedicated machine on a turnkey basis. This machine has not only exceeded Yarra Ranges search performance needs but makes the implementation and ongoing upkeep seamless from the Council’s perspective.

Ms Harris says using a single search capability across key document repositories including Pathway and ECM ensures that nothing can fall through the gaps when performing searches.

She explains that if something were to fall through “we may not be able to fully meet our requests for information, whether it is Freedom of Information, Subpoena and Protected Disclosure requests or investigations.”

In its initial evaluation of search solutions, Yarra Ranges spoke to several other iPLATINUM customers about their experiences with iFerret. They had compelling stories to tell, expressing their enthusiasm about realising some great time savings said Ms Harris.

She was involved in the testing and roll out of iFerret. In testing the product the main consideration was that the iFerret achieved and upheld the same level of security as the source system it was searching and that the search results provided everything that was expected to be found.

In a production environment there are some 38 users of iFerret who undertake searches for FOI information, insurance discovery, governance, compliance, customer service.

“Feedback from these users has been very positive,” Ms Harris said. “They love it. Our FOI discovery process has reduced previous search times by at least 50 percent.”

Typical of the ease with which searches can be accelerated was a request from one of the Yarra Ranges directors for historical documentation relating to grants commission road files.

The particular difficulty was the possible retention of files/documents in personal folders or ‘non-obvious’ locations on disparate network drives formerly assigned to staff who had since departed the organisation

The Council’s FOI officer completed some initial research in the EDRMS system regarding the specific subject matter, keywords and dates. These search terms were then used in iFerret to run a number of queries, enabling the Director to find and compare historical and current information very quickly.

The Director reported to the FOI Officer “those 10 minutes with

*you and iFerret have saved hours of searching through normal means and reinventing what has previously been done”.*

Yarra Ranges information management personnel use iFerret daily to help discover archived materials for staff across the organisation. A typical example of such a search task concerns records formerly held in an on-site archive facility which were catalogued before transfer to an Approved Public Record Office Storage facility.

A large portion of the collection was catalogued into the EDRMS system through the use of individual ‘Inactive Records’ forms. These are Word documents with multiple lines of text representing the content of boxes. For example, one archive box might contain up to 50 to 100 septic tank permits, or 50 individual building permit envelopes or 20 client files.

iFerret enables the information management staff to pin-point the exact box location of specific files by entering the data i.e. name, address, permit number, which appears as an individual line item in the Inactive Record form.

In current interactions between a customer and the Council, iFerret is also helping Yarra Ranges move to customer-centric searching, with the objective of better decision-making.

“By using iFerret and getting a trail of correspondence we can make more informed decisions for our customers, including members of the public and constituents,” Ms Harris said.

The push towards customer-centric searching is already benefiting from iFerret’s key search results screen which provides everything relating to a customer.

Elsewhere, iFerret’s managed result set function is being used to provide council planning submissions to third parties by making it easier to provide a variety of documents from different sources as a single batch.

Ms Harris explains when the Council receives objections regarding Planning Scheme Amendments those objections must be sent to authorities such as energy provider SPAusnet or Yarra Valley Water. Sending a result set provides an easy to navigate and reference set of documents.

As the implementation of iFerret has gained momentum its use has definitely improved the speed and accuracy with which documentation can be located for Freedom of Information, Subpoena and Protected Disclosure requests and investigations.

With the limited application of high-level access, the FOI Officer is able to locate documentation that is kept in corporate systems, email repositories and business unit/personal network drives with a high degree of precision and promptness.

Ms Harris says the challenge still exists to sort through often vast returns of data.

“It is only through repeated use and familiarity that the operator can become adept at refining search strings to be more targeted in locating relevant information.”

iFerret provides the capability to narrow the search return information based on dates, document types, metadata filters and classifications enabling the operator to find only the specific piece of information they are looking for.

And, as the Council moves onto data cleansing Michelle Harris expects iFerret’s document duplication identification process will deliver yet another benefit to Yarra Ranges.

