

AUSSPEC DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION #1

A REGIONAL APPROACH

"RIDING THE WAVE TO SUSTAINABILITY"

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Abstract

This paper looks briefly at the process undertaken to review the AusSpec series of documentation for use within not just the Maroochy Shire Council, but within the region of neighbouring Councils adjacent to Maroochy, from Pine Rivers in the south to Cooloola Shire in the north.

Rather than view the potential introduction of any standard be it AusSpec or another alternative in isolation, it was considered more appropriate to include colleagues from these adjacent Councils in an attempt to gain the most from a regional implementation with economies of scale and assist the development industry with a uniform standard that covers the region.

To achieve consensus from these neighbouring Councils was both the challenge and incentive in relation to the AusSpec acceptance for the Region.

Key Words: Economies of scale, standard specifications, consensus, regional.



Introduction

Maroochy Shire Council as a member of the Northern Region, South East Queensland group of Councils that have joined forces to proactively investigate the benefits of implementing uniformity across the region, initially in relation to AusSpec, but also to consider other areas of standardisation that can assist with the issues and problems that face all Local Councils.

The Northern Region, South East Queensland group of Councils currently include:

- Pine Rivers Shire Council
- Redcliffe City Council
- Caboolture Shire Council
- Caloundra City Council
- Maroochy Shire Council
- Noosa Council
- Cooloola Shire Council

To date the joint Council initiatives currently being collaboratively worked upon by these regional Council's include:

- SUNROC and Caboolture Shire Council "As Constructed Digital Lodgement of Data" Application Routines, (A Tactical Solution).
- Regional implementation of AusSpec #1 Development Construction Works.
- Potential of AusSpec #6A Park and Recreation Area Maintenance regional implementation.
- Quarterly Design Managers Forum, as initiated by Caboolture Shire Council.
- Potential for IPWEA Standard Drawings regional implementation.

This paper will focus primarily on the implementation process undertaken for implementation of the AusSpec #1 by a Regional Approach; however it will also cover

some important aspects of other regional positives.

BACKGROUND:

There were a number of reasons to implement a standard specification like AusSpec, the following are the main catalysts that guided the direction to investigate the regional approach and were considered the primary drivers:

- The existing AusSpec suite of products developed for use by Local Governments.
- The current success of the SUNROC & CSC “As Constructed” project in bringing together officers from other regional councils.
- The lack of dedicated Council resources for maintaining quality, detailed and consistent specifications within each Council.
- The need to provide clear guidance and uniformity for the Development Industry.

Another fundamental requirement was to ensure that the assets provided to Council are of suitable quality and meet the needs of the community and assist Council in **“RIDING THE WAVE TO SUSTAINABILITY”**, whereby these contributed assets meet maximum lifecycle requirements was a major consideration.

The regional approach also provided an opportunity to “win back” some creditability from the Development Industry by achieving more than a Shire wide implementation, but greater benefits to this industry from a regional implementation.

AusSpec:

For those that may not know AusSpec is a series of specification documents produced in a joint venture with the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia, Sinclair Knight Merz and the Australian Local Government Association.

These documents are widely used by Local Governments in Victoria and New South

Wales with the intent of becoming a nationally recognised specification.

These Specifications cover areas such as: Development Design and Construction, Asset Owners Roadwork’s, Standard Contract Documents, Road Reserve Maintenance, Parks and Recreation Area Maintenance, Buildings & Facilities Maintenance.

The initiative of LGA and IPWEA recognised the need to provide guidance and resources to the AusSpec production in the specification area that was impacting on Local Government operations.

These specifications provided the opportunity not to “reinvent the wheel”, as these specifications were a substantial starting point.

SUNROC & CSC – Regional Approach:

The basis of this project was used to investigate the regional implementation of AusSpec.

The SUNROC & CSC project saw representatives from four neighbouring Councils commence discussions back in July 2001 on the potential to develop an interim (tactical) solution for the provision of as constructed documentation from developers to Council, as well as to assist with the internally constructed assets being documented appropriately.

The group was conscious of the Brisbane City Council “Request for Proposal Digital Lodgement Consultancy” initiative that engaged Phil Grue and Ken Hicks, and the group provided regular feedback to these consultants on the SUNROC & CSC progress.

In addition feedback to the SEQROC forum was provided on a regular basis so as to ensure a wide spread dissemination of information.

The SUNROC (Sunshine Coast Regional Organisation of Councils) and Caboolture Shire Council evolved from the recognition that Local Government has a desire to better manage its assets.

The Councils directly involved in the SUNROC & CSC as constructed project include:

- Caboolture Shire Council
- Caloundra City Council
- Maroochy Shire Council
- Noosa Council



Further development was required of the contributed assets data gathering process that was used by the development industry and internal design offices to produce accurate as constructed documentation for lodgement with Council.

Rather than taking an inward looking focus, it was considered appropriate to engage neighbouring Councils and develop a regional solution.

Thus SUNROC & CSC “As Constructed” approach was commenced.

To date investigations and progress is being made to develop a set of standard routines to provide lodgement of as constructed documentation to these Councils and improve the process of the data capture and provision of contributed assets to Local Government.

Chris Sturgess from Noosa Council is providing a session on Asset Capture with links to the as constructed documentation during this conference. Please check your agenda for Chris’s session.

One of the values to come out of the SUNROC & CSC involvement was the fact that those staff needed to be involved were directly involved in the current issues or had previous experience in the related issues.

Relationships and personal networks were used to bring these key people together to discuss the common issues and then set out to resolve the problems without the clouding of political barriers.

As a number of these staff were involved at various levels, including operational and that the problems were common to all Councils, it was not difficult to formalise agreement on the direction to provide a suitable resolution, even with regard to data formats.

Using this same personal network connections of staff working at the relevant organisations, contact was made with key Council staff to ascertain the viability and potential of implementation of a set of standards associated with development roadwork construction within the Sunshine Coast and neighbouring Councils, namely AusSpec.

Levering off this successful investigation and agreement into the lodgement of digital data associated with “as constructed” documentation undertaken by Sunroc and Caboolture Shire Council, it was considered suitable to continue with the open discussion forums created by this group and venture into a possible regional approach for the use of the AusSpec set of standard specifications.

INTEGRATED PLANNING ACT (IPA)

As part of the development infrastructure system, an IPA planning scheme policy can be structured into the following sections:

- Design,
- Specifications,
- Standard Drawings.

An IPA Scheme or Planning Scheme Policy can call up requirements and standards published by AusSpec.

Regional councils using the AusSpec framework in their IPA Planning Scheme will achieve consistency in their development works.

Why a regional approach for AusSpec?

The regional approach aims to utilise shared resources and recognition of common goals to achieve economies of scale for the Councils involved and development industry.

There are benefits in sharing of the time resources in the review and implementation process.

Many Councils have purchased various sections of the AusSpec documentation, however the difficulty seems to occur in finding the time to assess and review these documents for use within the Local Authority, whereas this workload was shared across the members in this region.

There was also the potential to obtain a regional discount in the price of the documentation, you'll never know if you don't ask.

Need for detailed specifications

The Integrated Planning Act (IPA) requirements, national standards, benchmarking, economies of scale for councils, council in cooperation, development industry economies of scale were all factors that drove the need for these detailed specifications.

High on the agenda was the driving force of planned changes to the IPA and IDAS sections within Maroochy Shire Council and for other Councils the introduction of IPA schemes.

Initial responses were mixed with regard to Town Planning areas interested in referencing these documents and thus the appropriate officers were sought out from the original contact staff from the Sunroc & CSC project.

The AusSpec documentation provided an opportunity to have this specification referenced in the IPA Schemes to assist with the uniformity and standards required to be used by the development industry.

Process:

There was much reflection on the need to adopt and implement a uniform standard and all the positive aspects were discussed at length primarily to satisfy and ensure that the group's comfort zone was maintained. In addition there were many opinions on other standards that possibly should be adopted, with the MRD specification the main comfort zone for some.

These positives from the process were:

Preliminary talks established positive indications to progress the issue and with the internal support of the Planning and Construction areas, internal meetings were arranged to raise the item with the relevant Council officers and managers. The process used for evaluation and implementation centred on the facilitation being provided by Maroochy Shire Council Service and Corporate Planning Branch.

Maroochy Shire Council after operating their Maroochy 2000 Plan required a number of modifications to be undertaken, and part of these modifications was to implement a suitable specification that supported the Maroochy 2000 plan and also provided some uniform direction for the development industry.

Rather than take a restricted view within the boundaries of Maroochy Shire Council only, the Service & Corporate Planning Branch chose to "think big, start small and implement fast". With this philosophy in mind and the initial contacts being made with the neighbouring Councils, the investigation process to work through the possible implementation of a uniform specification for development construction and AusSpec #1 was underway.

The document was reviewed by each representative and comparisons made at regular meetings at fortnightly intervals to discuss and approve modifications. Issues were raised and discussed, with sections being highlighted in green for addition and red for deletion.

Reference to the Toowoomba City Council adopted documentation was considered and used as a guide as to which items may require closer scrutineering.

Changes to the source document were made including the adoption of suitable headers and footers, relating to the region. The preparation of the final version and the tracking of variations from the source document formed part of the on-going process.

Once all sections had been reviewed, additional meetings were held to tick or flick the changes identified. The document was then in its final stage and the responsibility for capturing and documenting the changes was considered.

Acknowledgment of the responsibility for the maintenance of these changes to the source document for the regional group posed some interesting issues, whereby key personnel needed to be identified to hold the revisions for the region.

In this case initially the Service and Corporate Planning Branch within Maroochy Shire Council offered their services to undertake this role initially to allow for the continuation of the process and provide valuable feedback as to the requirements in time and resources to carry out this role.

The key pro-active representatives from the seven regional Councils that included Pine Rivers Shire, Redcliffe City, Caboolture Shire, Caloundra City, Maroochy Shire, Noosa Council and Cooloola Shire, were:

Lindsey McLeod – Pine Rivers Shire, Michael King – Redcliffe City, Bruce Hattersley – Caboolture Shire, Anthony Takken, Caloundra City, Gary Taylor and Chris Morris – Maroochy Shire, Mick Hagen – Noosa Council and Ross Chapman – Cooloola Shire.

Obstacles discovered in the process

Some of the obstacles that were encountered in this process were as follows:

- Time and resources to review the AusSpec documents
- Changes required within each Council
- Agreement on any changes across all Councils
- Timeframes for implementation eg IPA requirements
- Existing policies or procedures entrenched within Councils
- Potential non-acceptance by the development industry

- Funding/budget requirements for each Council
- Training for use internally & externally to Councils

Where to from here?

To continue the open dialogue between the relevant officers within the regional group of Councils for not only the next editions of AusSpec, but also any other requirements for regional standardisation.

Investigate the viability to further implement other editions of the AusSpec series and review their appropriateness for use within the Local Government region and development industry.

Provide constructive feedback to the IPWEA in relation to AusSpec issues as they arise for continual improvement and enhancement.

Look for and strive for greater alliances with our neighbouring Councils to provide further benefits to each local community and the commercial operations within our boundaries with like ventures.

Investigate the possibility to use this process to influence any issues that affect our Local Government operations at the State Government Level.

Conclusion

In conclusion the initial benefits of utilising shared resources and recognition of common goals in a regional approach have allowed us to achieve.

Unless individual Councils have the luxury to set aside dedicated staff to undertake the implementation process of a project like this then it will be forever an ongoing problem for organisations in the Local Government environment of tight financial constraints to undertake.

The main obstacles were primarily cultural changes that needed to occur within the individual organisations. Staff time was more readily utilised by this process.

The interaction, support and extension of personal networks have further developed between staff from various Councils and also provided greater opportunities and confidence to consider other ventures on a regional basis.

Jointly these issues can be overcome and better service to the community and development industry can be provided.

References

<http://aus-spec.skm.com.au/index.html>

Author Biography

Pam originates from Victoria and has worked in Local Government for the past 23 years in many different roles which reflect her passion for learning new approaches and being at the forefront of change.

Pam commenced her career in the nursing field but quickly moved into management and development of community services.

After completing a Graduate Diploma of Management and Master of Business in the late eighties, Pam has had a variety of roles including:

Quality Management

Crime Analysis and Prevention

HR Manager

Divisional Business Manager

Competitive Business and Contracts Management

Service & Corporate Planning Manager

Her current focus on organisational excellence is coupled with a commitment to ensure that Maroochy Shire Council is well prepared to face the challenges of the future in order to ensure sustainability.

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