

Bold and Innovative

Finance's focus on innovation through digital transformation

The emergence of high-speed networks coupled with the proliferation of affordable customer devices continues to drive a preference towards digital channels for service delivery across society.

Finance is embracing digital transformation to better service its customers and as such has developed *The Department of Finance Digital Strategy 2018-2022* (the Strategy).

The Strategy ultimately commits Finance to transitioning its services online with the aspiration of using digital channels to deliver 90 per cent of the most meaningful customer-facing transactions by 2022.

Finance conducts in excess of half-a-million customer-facing transactions a year across 190 different transaction types. With almost half of these transaction types performed digitally, Finance continued to take steps during 2018-19 to increase its volume of online transactions.

Moving towards its digital future will help Finance improve services to customers, achieve its strategic goals and deliver cost savings to the WA taxpayer.

Leadership in government's digital transformation

Finance has taken a leadership role in the implementation of GovNext-ICT – a whole-of-government initiative to transition government from being an owner and operator of ICT infrastructure to a consumer of commercial compute, storage and network services.

This year, Finance not only assisted other government agencies in successfully implementing GovNext-ICT initiatives but also completed its own transition to cloud technology – a secure, reliable and scalable on-demand consumption based ICT service model.

As a result we were able to transition workloads from approximately 850 on premise servers to 330 virtual servers. This move enabled us to streamline staff processes, automate repetitive tasks such as power scheduling, and scale our resource needs to meet changing workloads and customer demands.

Importantly, Finance's move to the cloud allows us to more rapidly adopt new technologies and platforms that will enable the transformation of services outlined in the Strategy.

The final Gateway Review of the transition noted: "A concerted effort was made throughout the program to be an exemplar for similar future processes initiated by other Government Agencies. In this sense Finance has paved the way for other agencies to move into the GovNext arrangements."

Focus on business analytics

Finance was applauded this year for its capabilities in and use of data analytics to underpin good policy development and better targeted service delivery.

Finance's Government Procurement business unit manages 33 whole-of-government Common Use Arrangements (CUAs) through which approximately \$1 billion of goods and services are purchased annually. Business intelligence tools provide a source of open and transparent data and are used to support public authorities in making better procurement decisions, including extracting better value and reducing cost. This information has also led to increased transparency and accountability across the sector.

The Office of the Auditor General, Victoria tabled a report on State Purchase Contracts (SPCs) (the equivalent to WA's CUAs) on 20 September 2018 and identified Finance's Business Intelligence Reports and dashboards as examples of good practice: "the Western Australian (WA) Department of Finance provides a better practice example of how a central procurement body can capture procurement data to analyse government spending patterns and help identify opportunities to establish SPCs."

Business intelligence has been rapidly adopted across the organisation. We commenced with a small proof of concept, building capability among 50 staff who adopted the technology to visualise reports from the large number of separate data sources. Within the year, usage has increased to approximately 350 users who actively investigate and analyse data, and develop reports.

It is expected by enhancing data analytics and reporting it will lead to improved insight, accurate reporting on sector-wide buying behaviours, identification of aggregated buying

opportunities across all goods and services, informed policy-making, and ultimately better procurement outcomes for the sector.

Transition to WA.gov.au

Finance recognises the importance of a unified and cohesive approach to online service delivery for customers within the State. We have committed to transitioning our online presence into the whole-of-government website – WA.gov.au – to set an example for others in the sector and to create the blueprint for change that can be shared and reused.

This year we worked directly with customers to better understand user-journeys, pain points and expectations so that information and services can be designed around customer needs and away from traditional agency-centric architectures. The approach to co-design helps to validate design choices inherent in WA.gov.au and introduce features and services that directly benefit customers including improving accessibility, increasing search ability and enabling access across a range of mobile friendly devices.

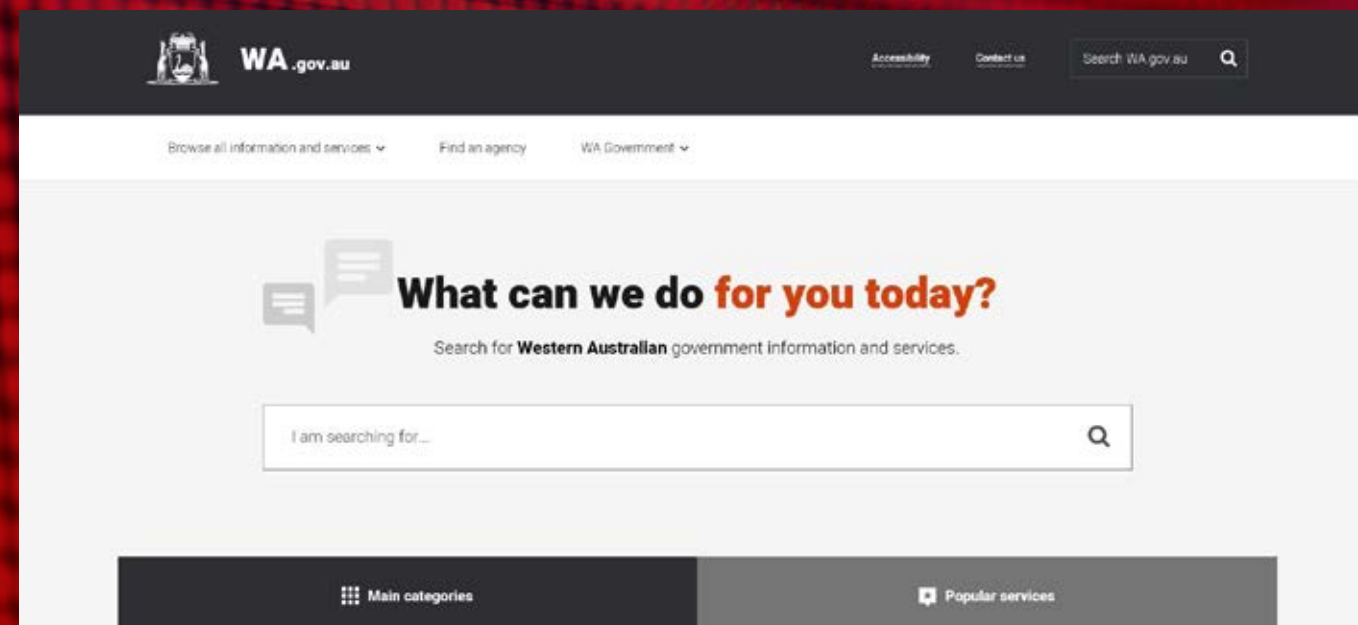
Finance is scheduled to transition to WA.gov.au at the start of the 2019-20 financial year.

New annual report template

Finance is thinking innovatively in developing this annual report. We have purposely utilised the WA.gov.au style guide to create an HTML (online digital) version and accompanying PDF of our annual report, which can be repurposed in future years. The template can also be circulated across the public sector for use by other government agencies.

This highlights Finance's leadership in trying to find innovative ways to improve government efficiency and generate further savings to the WA taxpayer.

Homepage of WA.gov.au



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Passionate and committed

to Government Office Accommodation reforms

Finance remains committed to realising significant savings to government and the WA taxpayer via the Government Office Accommodation (GOA) Reform Program in support of government's Debt Reduction Strategy.

In only its second year of operation, Finance has exceeded the expected annual targets and identified significant opportunities to reduce the size and cost of government office accommodation.

To date, Finance has reported total savings across the existing office accommodation portfolio of over \$113 million. In 2018-19, significant savings were achieved through the renegotiation of several high priority government leases in the Perth CBD to take advantage of the current favourable property market conditions.

Finance manages over 560,000 square metres of office accommodation across WA. Our whole-of-government approach to the planning, procurement and management of accommodation enables us to aggregate agencies' office accommodation needs and utilise government's large buying power to further reduce the overall expenditure.

Additionally, Finance's commitment to collecting and analysing information on 155 agency-owned buildings is progressing well with value-for-money accommodation proposals expected to be identified and presented to government by the end of 2019.

The program is expected to reduce government office accommodation by around 50,000 square metres and realise a further \$30.5 million by June 2022.

Relocation of government offices

This year saw Finance reach a major milestone with the successful relocation of over 700 Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) staff to a new leased building, Prime House, in Joondalup.

DWER Director General Mike Rowe acknowledged the Department of Finance team who led the Joondalup accommodation project stating: "The team at the Department of Finance worked with us tirelessly to plan for the move, identify our requirements, and assist us in the change management program to support staff in making this significant shift. They did a magnificent job in delivering our excellent new head office."

The relocation to Joondalup will save an estimated \$28 million over 15 years and reduce government's office accommodation footprint

by 3,800 square metres. The relocation is expected to play a significant role in the future growth and development of Joondalup as a vibrant and vital city centre.

The relocation of the Department of Communities head office functions to new premises in Fremantle is progressing, and more than 1,500 staff are expected to move to Kings Square Fremantle in early 2020.

Finance has also undertaken various expressions of interest (EOI) for office space, including space for a Western Australia Police Force headquarters, a police complex in Fremantle, a Parliamentary Precinct in West Perth and a consolidation of agencies in Bunbury. Subject to the outcomes of the EOIs, submissions will be made to the Government.

Co-Working Hub Strategy

Joondalup and Fremantle are vital cogs in government's Co-Working Hub Strategy, which leverages the GovNext service to allow staff to access their agency's network services from selected government office buildings in strategic metropolitan locations.

The decentralisation of government agencies to major metropolitan activity centres will drive the growth in infrastructure, public transport, local business and services within neighbouring suburbs. It is expected to ease the strain on public transport into Perth during peak periods and assist the reduction of traffic congestion in the Perth CBD.



Influencing progress

through the Aboriginal Procurement Policy

Finance has led the Government's commitment to increasing the economic participation of Aboriginal businesses through the implementation of the Aboriginal Procurement Policy and is on track to exceed the first year mandated target by 400 per cent.

In the first six months of the Policy, more than four per cent of all State Government contracts have been awarded to registered Aboriginal businesses with 98 per cent of those based in Western Australia. This is a significant outcome that demonstrates the strength of the local Aboriginal business sector.

The Policy requires WA government agencies to award a minimum of one per cent of contracts to registered Aboriginal business throughout the 2018-19 financial year.

A total of 74 government contracts were awarded to 53 registered Aboriginal businesses from 1 July to 31 December 2018, representing an approximate value of \$25 million.

Finance has been integral to the implementation and success of the Aboriginal Procurement Policy. We have undertaken a number of education and training sessions with Aboriginal businesses and government agencies in the metropolitan area, Kalgoorlie and Karratha during the 2018-19 financial year.

Additional training will be delivered across the State to Aboriginal businesses in regional and metropolitan locations from June to September 2019. The goal of this training is to ensure government procurement processes and practices are understood to maximise the opportunity for Aboriginal businesses to harness opportunities presented by the Policy.

Finance will soon award contracts for capability building services to further support the development of the Aboriginal business sector, including emerging Aboriginal businesses located throughout Western Australia.

Another Aboriginal Business Expo will be held late in 2019, which will continue to support relationship building between government and the Aboriginal business sector. This year's event will celebrate outcomes from the first year of the Policy and see government present contracting opportunities to the Aboriginal business sector. The 2018 expo saw more than 60 Aboriginal businesses connect with approximately 200 government attendees.



Justine Kinney,
Cultural Creative Agency



Innovative online services portal

A win for taxpayers

State Revenue continued to focus on providing customers with easier access to services through the expansion of its Online Services Portal in 2018-19.

Access to First Home Owner Grant Unique Identification Number Look-up

The First Home Owner Grant (FHOG) is a one-off payment to assist eligible first home buyers to purchase a new home for use as their principal place of residence.

Finance recognises its important role in assisting first home buyers through an often stressful period and, as a result, expanded its FHOG web-based tool in July 2018. The facility assists both applicants and their agents (for example, conveyancers or mortgage brokers) to check on the status of a FHOG application via the Online Services Portal.

The tool, which has seen a high uptake level with nearly 38,000 FHOG status checks since July 2018, offers increased convenience for customers who can access application information as and when it suits them. The use of technology to enable customer self-service has led to reduced costs in administering these processes, while empowering staff to focus on improved service delivery outcomes.

Land Tax services

Land tax is an annual tax on land and is a source of general revenue for government. As a key revenue stream, it assists in the funding of critical services to the community such as education, health, law and order, and critical infrastructure.

Finance has worked hard to improve the experience and efficiency of tax obligations on community and businesses alike. In the last year, Finance has enhanced its online services portal to include digital facilities that enable customers to more easily fulfil their land tax responsibilities, alleviating the burden of manual paper-based processes and reducing the overheads associated with supporting analogue channels. Customers are now able to self-serve by:

- viewing their account summary, land holdings and valuations;
- accessing past and present-day assessment notices; and
- conducting a range of other online transactions including payment extensions, refunds and enquiries.

The system is still in its infancy and has already registered more than 1,500 users at the end of the financial year.

Fully-automated payment arrangements

Finance has created an online solution for customers to apply for payment plans for land tax, payroll tax, duties and first home owner grant debts.

The facility offers increased convenience for customers who can now apply online for a tax payment arrangement and receive a decision in real time. This removes delays previously associated with customers submitting written applications to State Revenue for manual processing. It also provides a common method of requesting and administering payment plans across various revenue lines.

Since its launch, the system has processed nearly 3,200 payment arrangements valued at around \$109 million in managed debt. Importantly, this feature can help ease financial pressure on families and businesses by giving them increased flexibility to meet their State tax obligations.

Expansion of payment methods and refunds

Electronic payment methods were expanded in July 2018 to include Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), BPAY and credit card across various revenue lines, and electronic refunds were introduced for all revenue lines.

Previously, some payments were restricted to non-electronic methods (cash or cheque) or only had limited electronic methods available (credit card, BPAY, direct debit). As at the end of June 2019, around 90 per cent of all payments for the 2018-19 financial year were made electronically, offering improved customer convenience and significantly reducing costs associated with processing non-electronic payments.

All refunds were previously paid by cheque only. So far, nearly 75 per cent of refund applications made through the Online Services Portal have been paid by EFT, improving the timely access to funds for customers.



Honest and respectful approach

**makes Graduate program
number 1 in Australia**

This year Finance was named Australia's number one graduate employer by the Australian Association of Graduate Employers Top 75 list, improving on its thirteenth position last year. This achievement marks the first time a government agency has achieved this ranking nationally.

More than 2,500 graduates across Australia were anonymously surveyed and asked to rate their employer on a number of key areas including:

- orientation or induction program;
- training and development program;
- quality of work;
- career progression;
- supervisor or manager;
- compensation and benefits;
- work/life balance; and
- company culture.

Seven graduates with a diverse range of qualifications, approaches to innovation, problem-solving and critical thinking skills were recruited by Finance in 2019.

Graduates are rotated throughout the organisation offering insight into the diverse services we deliver, helping them develop transferrable skills. Gaining knowledge from a number of business units helps Finance to improve the way we work through fostering professional relationships and eliminating silos.

Our program, which has seen 134 graduates participate since it was established in 2011, provides opportunities to interact with a wide variety of stakeholders, including working collaboratively with other government agencies and accompanying the Director General and other senior staff to work-related events.

Another key component of our success is our focus on relationships and the support provided by management, supervisors, co-workers and the graduate alumni to help our graduates transition smoothly from study to a professional working environment.

The success of the program allows Finance to share its knowledge and experience with other agencies and provide advice on how to establish or improve their own Graduate Programs. Due to the high calibre of applicants, Finance shares the applicants placed in a graduate pool with other agencies.



A graduate perspective

**Comments from
2019 graduate
Victoria Gray**

Finance has a really positive attitude towards training and retaining graduates so I felt like my contribution was valued right from day one. My first rotation was in the Information Technology and Communications team in Corporate Services where I was engaged in the development of policies to support the Department's Information Security Management Framework.

Finance has a focus on recruiting graduates based on their values and all university degrees are considered. The benefit of values-based recruitment has been obvious in our graduate cohort. Despite coming from vastly different backgrounds we have been bonded by our shared values and attitudes.

The program includes Community Involvement Development, which we spent with Conservation Volunteers Australia at Lesmurdie Falls National Park. This gave us an opportunity to give back to the community and further share experiences as a cohort.

Rather than just a job, I have been given countless opportunities to develop myself as an individual and as a professional. Within the program, there is an internal training calendar that focusses on developing transferrable skills. This skill development is continued through the Public Sector Commission's Graduate Development Program, which has exposed me to parts of government that I never even knew existed while studying at university. Further to this, your supervisor and graduate coordinator work to identify your strengths and weaknesses and seek to individually tailor training, allowing you to reach your full potential.

The program creates an environment that not only wants you to flourish, but gives you tailored support to achieve your potential. This has seen the majority of previous graduates gain full-time employment within the Department or with other agencies. Last year, 100 per cent of graduates secured roles within Finance, and I hope to see the same outcome for our cohort.