

# Local Government Records Management Benchmarking Report

January 2014

An independent, comparative assessment of records management services in Local Government.

**VOTAR PARTNERS**  
BUSINESS CONSULTING SERVICES



## Executive Summary

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Votar Partners were engaged by the Wyndham City Council to benchmark their records management service against other Local Governments in Australia. An online survey was conducted during January 2014 to gather data to benchmark records management activities, staff and systems, with a particular focus on the handling of incoming mail. Survey responses were received from 70 local governments across Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.

Key findings from this benchmarking study are as follows:

- Core operational records management services provided by organisations in the benchmarking group were similar.
- Some records management teams need to be more strategic and proactive to ensure good recordkeeping is occurring across the organisation.
- A high proportion of records are not being captured and managed in Local Government records management systems.
- HP TRIM was the most commonly used Electronic Document & Records Management System (EDRMS) in the benchmarking group.
- Most systems were installed more than three years ago and have been upgraded in the last two years.
- Only a small proportion of organisations are capturing social media records, despite their current popularity in Local Government.
- EDRMS integration capabilities are not being fully utilised to improve the efficiency of record capture and retrieval in Local Government.
- Although there are similarities in the metadata being captured, variation still points to a lack of adoption of well-established recordkeeping metadata standards in Local Government.
- Some organisations still aren't using workflow technology to improve process efficiency and customer service responsiveness.
- Many plans are not digitised and are being managed in hardcopy format.
- There is a significant variation in processing efficiency of incoming mail in the benchmarking group. One organisation processes each item (on average) in just one minute, where as another takes 16.2 minutes per item. The mean time to process each item is 4.2 minutes.
- There are significant opportunities for many Local Governments to streamline the processing of their incoming mail.

Customised reports are available, allowing you to understand how your organisation compares against your peers as captured in the benchmarking process. The customised report analyses the similarities and differences between your organisation's records management service and comparative organisations (in terms of size, volume, system or service profile) from the benchmarking group. This personalised analysis will provide you with an assessment of your current position and importantly identify opportunities for improvement that can assist you to position and achieve business benefits through improved records management.

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## 1. Background

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Votar Partners were engaged by the Wyndham City Council to benchmark their records management service against other Local Governments in Australia. An online survey was conducted during January 2014 to gather data to benchmark records management activities, staff and systems, with a particular focus on the handling of incoming mail.

Participation in the survey was optional and respondents could choose to remain anonymous. Individual results haven't be disclosed to our client or any other organisation. Anyone who completed the survey and provided a contact email address has been provided with a copy of the de-identified results through this report.

## 2. Objectives

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The objectives of this study were to benchmark the:

- Range of records management and related services being provided
- Volume of incoming mail being received and captured
- Types of records management systems being used
- Quantity of metadata being captured for incoming mail
- Level of integration between systems
- Efficiency of service delivery

## 3. Scope

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The scope of this study includes the central provision of records management and related services in Australian Local Governments. It includes the staff, systems and key processes utilised to deliver these services.

## 4. Benchmarking Group Profile

Survey responses were received from 70 local governments across Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia. Most organisations in the benchmarking group have less than 500 staff and operate from 10 or less physical sites. A profile of the organisations that participated in this study is provided in figures one and two below.

Figure 1: Number of Staff

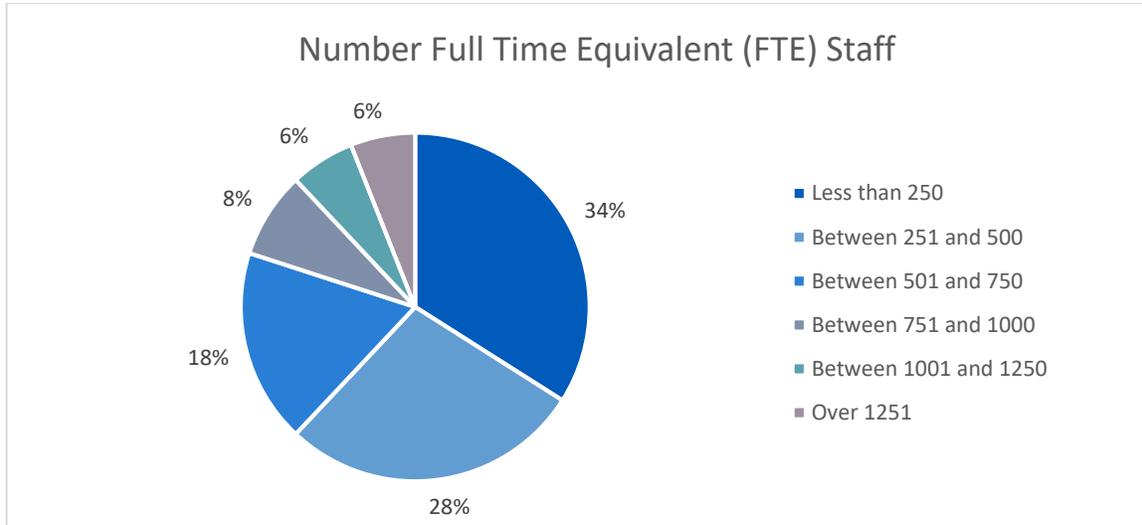
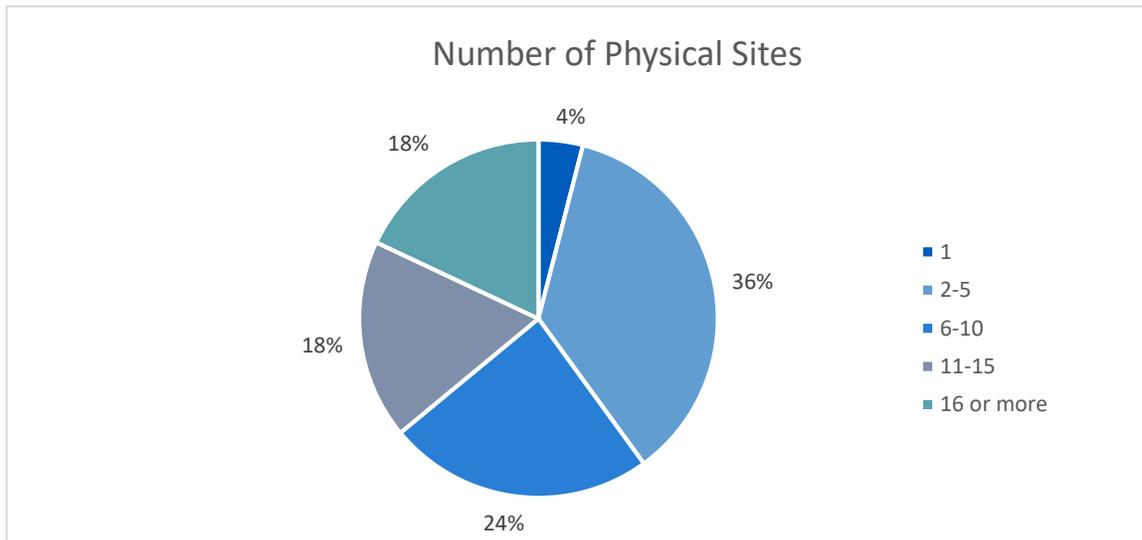


Figure 2: Number of Sites





## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Services

Core operational records management services provided by organisations in the benchmarking group were similar. Most records management teams open and distribute incoming mail (96%), register incoming correspondence (91%), including faxes (89%) and central email (81%), and digitise incoming correspondence (81%). It is also very common to provide secondary storage and retrieval services (87%) and sentencing and undertake disposal of records (89%). While many provide training and education services (83%), setting strategy and policy (76%) and conducting record quality audits (63%) is less common. The registration (36%) and digitisation (27%) of outgoing mail by the organisation’s records management service is now fairly uncommon. Other information management related services are also far less common in the benchmarking group. These include Freedom of Information (37%), subpoenas (33%), information privacy (31%) and reprographics (11%), as shown in figure three below.

Figure 3: Records Management Services



## 5.2 Staff

The number of people working in an organisation's records management team varies considerably based on the size of the organisation, the number and type of records management services provided and the volume of records handled. The minimum number of resources in an organisation was one and the maximum was 21. The use of contractors by organisations in the benchmarking group appears to be minimal. The mean number of records management resources in organisations in the benchmarking group was four, as shown in table one below.

Table 1: Number of Records Management Resources

Number of Resources	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
<b>Staff</b>	0	20	4
<b>Contractors</b>	0	3	0
<b>Total</b>	1	21	4

## 5.3 Transaction Volume

The volume of incoming mail handled by an organisation's records management team also varies considerably based on the size of the organisation and the types of records management services they provide. The mean number of incoming mail items handled is 212 per working day, with the majority of this being from hardcopy mail (120), followed by central email (60) and only a small amount through faxes (10). The mean number of items registered into the records management system however is only 80 (38% of the total), and the mean number digitised is 70 (58% of hardcopy mail), as shown in table two below. This suggests that a high proportion of records are not being captured and managed in Local Government records management systems.

Table 2: Incoming Mail Volume

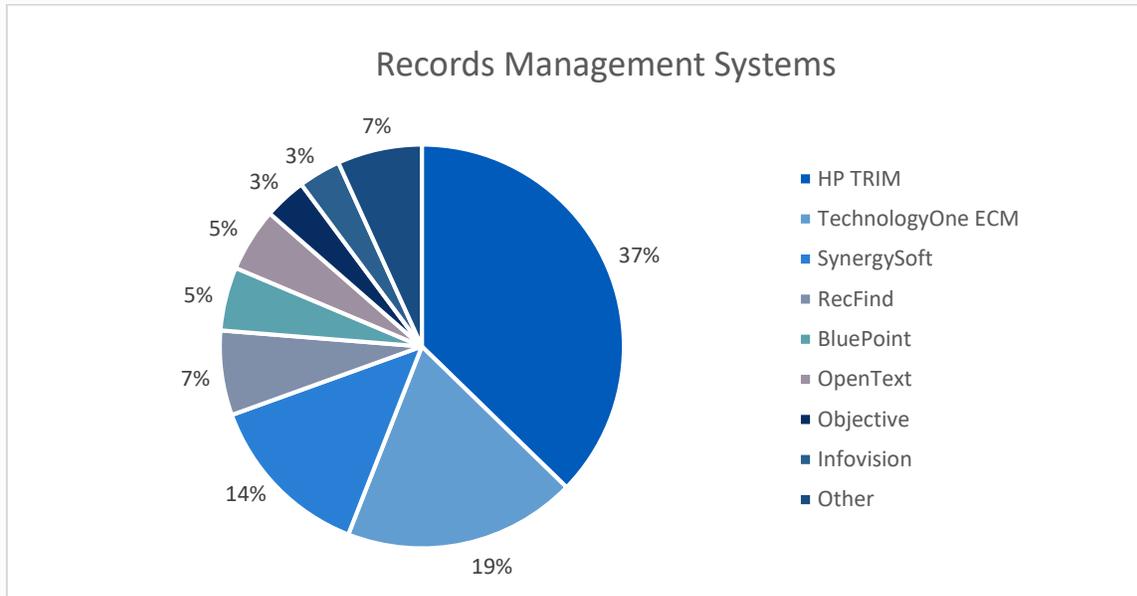
Average Daily Volume	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
<b>Incoming Mail (Total)</b>	7	2090	212
• <b>Hardcopy</b>	6	700	120
• <b>Fax</b>	0	340	10
• <b>Central Email</b>	0	1500	60
<b>Mail Registration</b>	4	550	80
<b>Mail Digitisation</b>	0	525	70



## 5.4 Systems

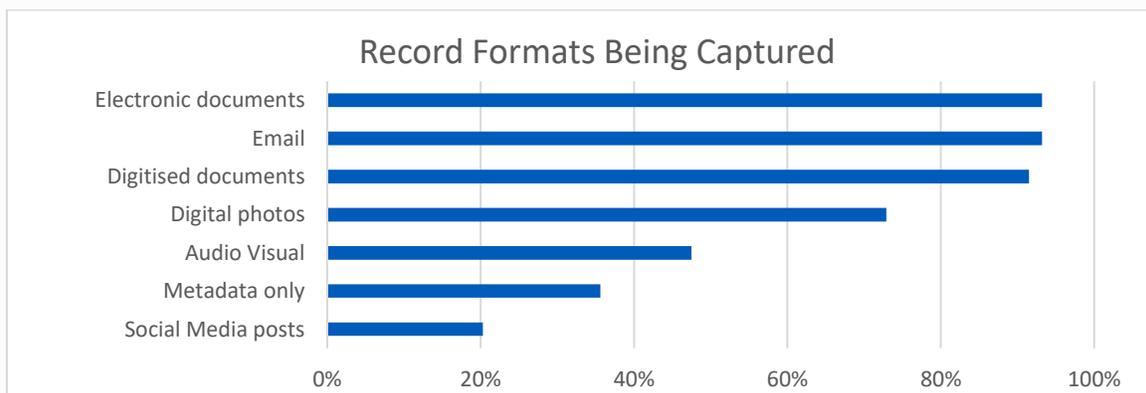
HP TRIM was the most commonly used Electronic Document & Records Management System (EDRMS) in the benchmarking group (37%). TechnologyOne ECM (19%) and SynergySoft (14%) were the next most commonly used systems, as shown in figure four below. Most systems were installed more than three years ago (75%) and have been upgraded in the last two years (77%).

Figure 4: Records Management Systems



Despite a wide range of systems being used, most organisations in the benchmarking group are using their system in a very similar way. Most are using their system to capture electronic documents and emails (93%), and digitised hardcopy documents (91%), and few are only capturing record metadata (36%). While capturing digital photos is fairly common (73%), less organisations are using their system to capture audio visual material (47%), and only a small proportion are capturing social media records (20%) despite their current popularity in Local Government, as shown in figure five below.

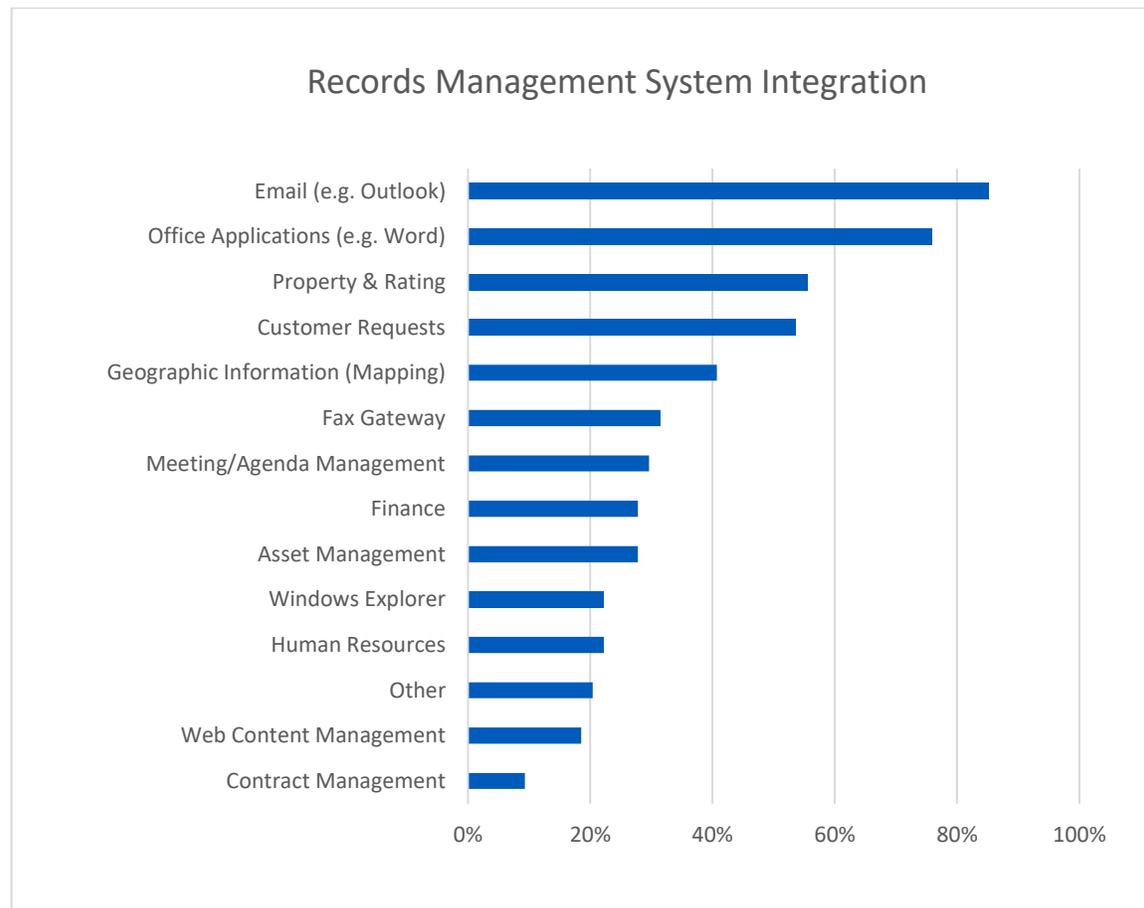
Figure 5: Record Formats Captured



## 5.5 Integration

Not surprisingly, email (85%) and office applications (76%) are the most common systems for an EDRMS to be integrated with. Integration with other core systems such as Property & Rating (56%), Customer Requests (54%) and Geographic Information (41%) systems is less common. Integration between the EDRMS and other corporate systems is considerably less common as shown in figure six below. This indicates that EDRMS capabilities are not being fully utilised to improve the efficiency of record capture and retrieval in Local Government.

Figure 6: Records Management System Integration

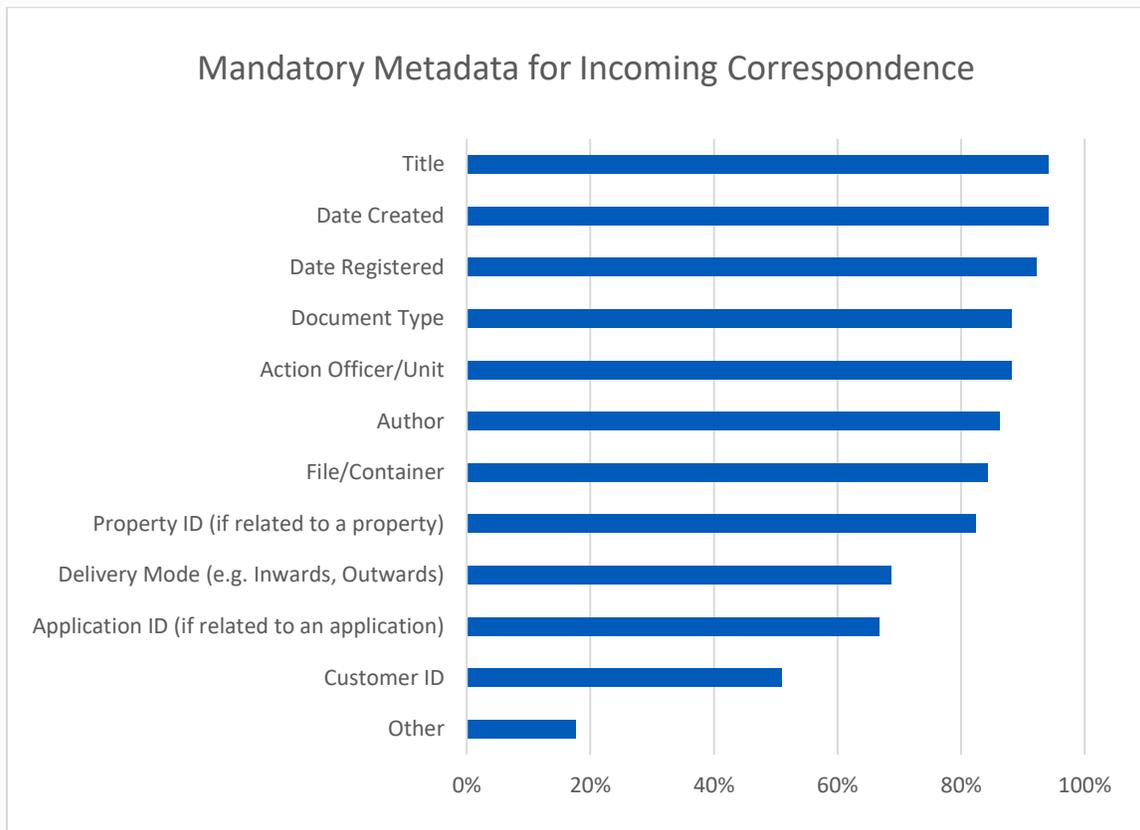




## 5.6 Metadata

The metadata elements being captured for incoming correspondence by organisations in the benchmarking group is mostly similar. Standard metadata elements such as the title (94%), date created (94%), date registered (92%), document type (88%), action officer (88%), author (86%) and file (84%) are captured by most organisations. Property ID is also being captured by most organisations (82%) if the record relates to a property. Some organisations are also capturing additional metadata elements which are less common, such as delivery mode (69%), application ID (67%) and customer ID (51%) as shown in figure seven below. Although there are similarities in the metadata being captured, the variation still points to a lack of adoption of well-established recordkeeping metadata standards in Local Government.

Figure 7: Mandatory Metadata for Incoming Correspondence



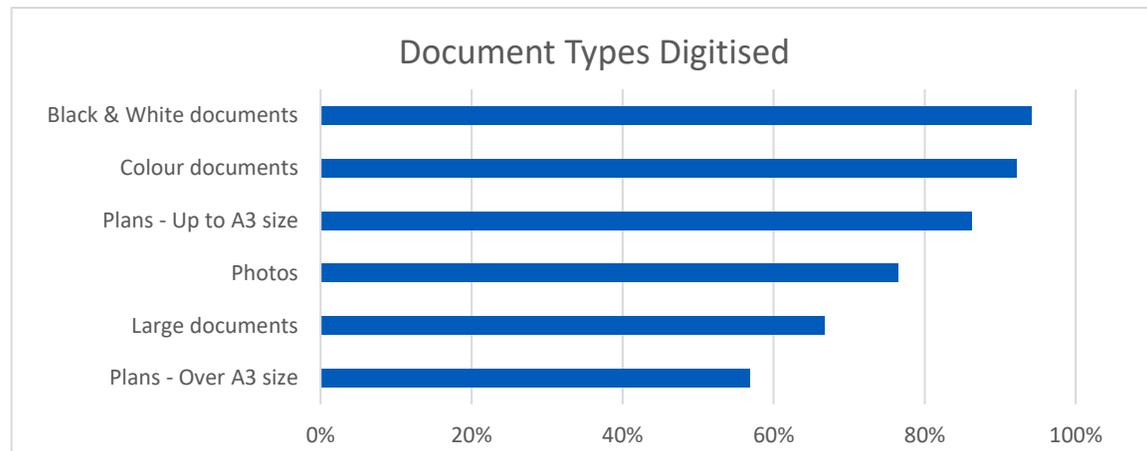
## 5.7 Workflow

Many organisations in the benchmarking group (65%) are using automated workflow functionality to distribute incoming correspondence to action officers. However 35% of organisations still aren't using workflow technology to improve process efficiency and customer service responsiveness.

## 5.8 Digitisation

Most organisations (81%) are digitising at least some of their hardcopy, incoming mail. It is very common to digitise black and white documents (94%) and colour documents (92%). It is also fairly common to digitise plans up to A3 in size (86%). Plans over A3 in size are less commonly digitised (57%), as are large documents (67%), as shown in figure eight below. This indicates that many plans are still being managed in hardcopy format.

Figure 8: Document Types Digitised





## 5.9 Efficiency

Benchmarking participants estimated the daily number of person hours being spent by records management staff on six key activities related to the processing of incoming mail. The average number of minutes being spent processing an item of incoming mail has been calculated based on the average daily volume of records handled by each organisation in the benchmarking group. The most time consuming activity is registration, with a mean time of 3.6 minutes per item of hardcopy mail. Interestingly, central emails are slightly quicker to register (2.4 minutes per item) and faxes are significantly slower (6.0 minutes per item). The next most time consuming activity is scanning, with a mean time of 2.0 minutes per item.

There is a significant variation in processing efficiency in the benchmarking group. One organisation processes each item (on average) in just one minute, where as another takes 16.2 minutes per item. The mean time to process each item is 4.2 minutes, as shown in table three below. This result indicates that there are significant opportunities for many Local Governments to streamline the processing of their incoming mail. More sophisticated scanning software can reduce the time spent manually correcting images, and registration can be simplified through system configuration changes and the establishment of clear and consistent business rules and record titling protocols.

Table 3: Incoming Mail Processing Efficiency Comparison (Average Minutes per Item)

Activity	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
<b>Mail Opening</b>	0.2	3.0	0.7
<b>Scanning</b>	0.3	9.6	2.0
<b>Mail Registration</b>	0.3	12.4	3.6
<b>Central Email Registration</b>	0.3	12.0	2.4
<b>Fax Registration</b>	0.9	20.7	6.0
<b>Mail Distribution</b>	0.1	3.4	0.6
<b>Registration Q.A.</b>	0.1	4.7	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>4.2</b>

Note: Statistical outliers have been excluded to account for survey response errors.

## 6. Records Management Trends

Some key trends and issues that are currently impacting records management in Australian Local Government are outlined below.

### *Strategic Management*

Local Governments are facing increasing pressure to manage records more strategically as a vital corporate asset. Records/Information/Knowledge Managers are developing Council-wide policies, strategies and business rules and engaging with internal stakeholders, through broad consultation, training and regular communication in order to address organisational needs.

Records management teams are becoming more tightly integrated into their organisation to better support the business of Council and create a more efficient, responsive and accountable organisation. A key driver for this is the “Digital by Default” mega trend which directly impacts how a council delivers its services. Digital services within a Local Government context have a high degree of dependency on records and the automation of record processing across Council systems, business units and resources. Successfully addressing this increasing demand will require records management to become a strategic enabler of business.

### *Mobility*

While much of a Local Government workforce has always been mobile, advancements in technology are making it possible for field workers to more easily capture and access information without having to return to the office. Technology vendors are now offering system interfaces for mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets which can greatly improve the productivity and effectiveness of Local Government field workers.

### *Social Media*

While most if not all Local Governments in Australia have a social media presence, the integration of these records into their records management system is significantly lacking. In addition to achieving compliance with the capture, storage, retention and disposal of social media records the specific scenarios where social media is used by Council and the community requires targeted action. Increasingly common usage scenarios include:

- Social Media becoming a source of information sharing and collaboration between Council and the community in times of emergency response; and
- Delivery of community services to youth and other areas of the community, requiring an understanding of information privacy and sensitivity across the records lifecycle.

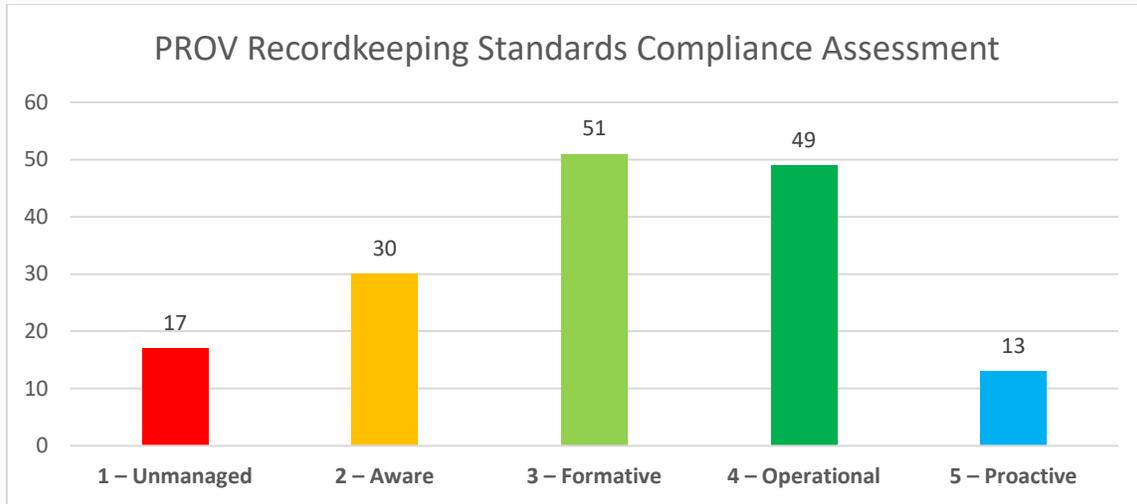
### *Standards Compliance*

Mandatory standards that are more specific and measurable than even before have been issued by state archives and records authorities (such as the Public Record Office Victoria, State Records Office of WA and State Records NSW) to improve recordkeeping across government. There is now a regulatory requirement to regularly conduct audits against these standards and implement improvements to address compliance gaps.



Over the last year Votar Partners have assessed four Victorian Public Sector agencies against Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) Recordkeeping Standards. Each agency was assessed against 40 recordkeeping principles across seven standards using a five-point maturity model. A rating of four or higher indicates compliance with mandatory compliance requirements. The combined results of these maturity assessments are shown in figure nine below. The results show a high level of non-compliance (61%), however plans were in place to address over half of their compliance gaps.

Figure 9: Recordkeeping Standards Compliance in Four Victorian Public Sector Agencies



## 7. More Information

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Customised reports are available, allowing you to understand how your organisation compares against your peers as captured in the benchmarking process. The customised report analyses the similarities and differences between your organisation's records management service and comparative organisations (in terms of size, volume, system or service profile) from the benchmarking group. This personalised analysis will provide you with an assessment of your current position and importantly identify opportunities for improvement that can assist you to position and achieve business benefits through improved records management.

To order your report, or for more information on how you can successfully address the records management trends facing your organisation, please contact Mark Williamson via email at [markw@votar.com.au](mailto:markw@votar.com.au) or call (03) 9895 9672 or 0425 317 770.