



ApprovalPlus helps **Environment Canterbury** Rebuild



In November 1989 Environment Canterbury was formed from 33 different bodies to provide regional and resource management roles.

Key Benefits...

- Quick implementation
- Multi-location
- Control with delegation of authority settings
- Purchase Orders and Invoices quickly matched
- View of current purchase commitments

Environment Canterbury is the regional council working with the people of Canterbury to manage the region's air, water and land. Environment Canterbury is committed to the sustainable management of the environment while promoting the region's economic, social and cultural well-being.

The Problem or Challenge

Environment Canterbury (ECAN) covers a large region with (prior to the February earthquake) most staff based in the central Christchurch office. ECAN staff needed to stay connected especially with those who were based in other smaller townships.

ECAN was using a manual purchase to pay system similar to many in New Zealand, with a manual process that generated paper PO's which were signed off according to a list of delegations. While this offered some important controls, an automated system would offer greater control, speed and visibility.

"The main driver behind the project was initially to improve visibility on purchase order commitments," notes Helen Sellwood, Finance Manager, Environment Canterbury.

Smooth Implementation through Shaky Times

The initial decision to implement ApprovalPlus was well into the final stages when the first major earthquake hit Canterbury in September, putting the purchase on hold. Once settled back into daily life, Environment Canterbury went ahead with the purchase and implementation of the purchase to pay system. Implementation activities were once again held up with the devastating February earthquake. The February earthquake made the Kilmore Street offices unsafe and ECAN had to look for alternative offices. The offices are now in a number of locations in Lincoln and small townships around Canterbury as well as having a number of staff working from home.

About Fusion5

Fusion5 is a professional services organisation specialising in the implementation and support of business application software across Enterprise Resource Planning, Customer Relationship Management, Human Capital Management, Enterprise Project Management and IT Service Management.

Our large team of highly qualified project managers and consultants means our track record for delivering on time, on budget projects is second to none. And our ability to support a wide range of business applications means our customers can enjoy the benefits of consolidated support through a highly committed business partnership.

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Although the situation was not good in the region, Environment Canterbury recognised the need to have the ApprovalPlus system in place to deal efficiently with the spending required to support the people of Canterbury during the recovery and rebuild and the need to have controls in place that assisted everyone during the trying months following the earthquake. “We could see from the initial earthquake that the community and our staff would be under extra pressure. We were already looking at the ApprovalPlus system and were impressed with the benefits. Once the earthquake happened we knew it was the right solution for us. Fusion5 was great and worked closely with us during a difficult time to ensure the implementation went smoothly.”

Environment Canterbury has implemented both the Purchase Order (PO) and Invoice modules. The PO module allows authorisation levels to be set and POs to be approved before purchases are made, when all details are at hand and fresh in the mind. Once an invoice is received the invoice is matched to the PO; if it is within a predefined level of tolerance it is batched and exported to the finance system. If there is too much variation then it is sent to the business users for coding and approval of the additional spend. This process adds a strong level of control for Environment Canterbury.

Successful Staff Uptake

“The ApprovalPlus solution has meant minimal disruption to our processes and staff. Post February the focus shifted from improving visibility on commitments to supporting staff who were now spread across Christchurch instead of being in a single CBD location. We wanted to make it easier to approve invoices and being able to scan them and have approval via ApprovalPlus was ideal. Visibility is still important but we allowed a longer timeline to achieve purchase orders for all invoices.

“We have rolled ApprovalPlus out to 100 staff already and we will need to increase that number in the near future. Our staff are enthusiastic about the system and in particular its ease of use. Having a trace from PO approver through to the invoice makes life a lot easier. This has allowed staff to manage their spend while assisting with rebuilding the Canterbury region. At any point in time those using the system can now see what their spending commitments are, quickly and accurately”, Helen Sellwood explains.

An email is generated to tell an approver that a new PO / invoice has been generated requiring their approval. They can log in from their current location and approve the PO / invoice without needing to sign off on a physical paper document. There is also the ability to nominate another authority if the delegated staff member is unable to connect to the business; a power outage for example.

“ApprovalPlus has proven itself; we are pleased with the efficiency it has brought to our processes. Staff uptake has been quick and there has been very minimal downtime for training,” praises Helen.