



Police checks move online

Australia Post has developed a user-friendly high-tech system for the official forms used by Western Australia (WA) Police.

The sophisticated electronic system currently handles one of the most commonly used police forms, the National Police Certificate Application (also known as a "police check").

Western Australia Police Assistant Director of the Office of Information Management John Purcell says Australia Post worked closely with WA Police to develop an innovative solution that offers a more convenient and efficient service for clients, and saves WA Police considerable time and effort.

"Australia Post also conducts the 100-point identity check, manages payment, processes the application and mails the certificate to applicants on our behalf," John says. One of the standout features of the system is that the online form automatically validates all mandatory pieces of information.

"The feature highlights any defects in the data entry when the applicant prints the form, enabling them to make corrections before lodging – which increases the level of compliancy," says John.

After completing the form online, the applicant is instructed to print it out and take it to an Australia Post outlet where an identity check is undertaken. The form is then forwarded to Australia

Post's information logistics business Decipha for electronic scanning and storing. Decipha transmits the form's 2D barcode to the Federal CrimTrac Agency for checking against national police criminal history information.

"The use of the 2D barcode means that instead of sending printed forms to CrimTrac, Australia Post can send relevant applicant information electronically, which is both secure and quick," John explains.

WA Police receives the results electronically from CrimTrac and forwards the details of applicants who return a "clear" result to Australia Post, who then prints the certificate and mails it to the applicant. Those who return a "hit" or "match" are managed by WA Police in accordance with the appropriate legislation.

Around 12,000 people in Western Australia currently apply for a National Police Certificate each month, and John predicts that around 40 per cent will apply using the online system.

The online solution has provided many benefits for WA Police. "It has made the tracking of applications easier, has eliminated a significant administrative task for us and has delivered cost savings since we now use fewer hard copy forms," he says.

To view the form visit www.police.wa.gov.au and select "online forms".

A VISIONARY SOLUTION

When Ryan Honschooten was asked by a prospective employer to provide a National Police Certificate, he expected that someone would need to help him download and fill in the form.

But when the vision-impaired 34 year old went online, he was delighted to find that a new system had been implemented that would enable him to complete the form himself.

"When I ran the cursor over the Western Australia Police home page, I discovered that the form provided all the verbal prompts I needed to complete it myself online. I could hardly believe it," says Ryan, who works for the Association for the Blind in Western Australia.

Like many vision-impaired people, Ryan has a special screen reader in his computer, which picks up verbal instructions built into websites.

Australia Post's developers used the accessibility features available through most personal computers but took additional steps to improve accessibility for the vision impaired.

"We made sure that the form 'talked' in a way that was easy to follow through every field, and would prompt the user if a mistake was made," says Chris O'Meagher, from the Financial Services Division at Australia Post.

"We thoroughly tested it to make sure we didn't overlook anything."

After completing and printing the form unaided, Ryan says he immediately alerted the technology team in his office to its ease of use.

"It's just so awesome to be able to fill out a government-related form online without anyone's help. I wish all forms were this easy to access and complete."