

Charting a path to Azure for

Shoalhaven City Council



Microsoft Partner of the Year
2024 Azure ANZ Winner

Shoalhaven City Council is a large regional council overseeing 49 towns and villages on the South Coast of NSW. With a population of more than 108,500 people, Shoalhaven is known for its pristine beaches, striking coastal plains and surrounding mountains. The area has several award-winning wineries and an array of outdoor adventure, history, arts, and cultural experiences that entice visitors to the region.

Challenges

In recent years, the Shoalhaven region has experienced numerous natural disasters, from bushfires to flooding and severe weather events. These experiences led the Council to review its disaster recovery procedures and consider hosting options for its applications and corporate data.

The existing disaster recovery site was located just a few kilometres away from the main Council chambers in a facility considered not fit for purpose. Aside from disaster recovery, the facility also housed several production workloads across a fleet of ageing servers, which were out of warranty and reaching their limits.

The Shoalhaven City Council already had most of its applications as SaaS-based services. However, critical applications were still housed onsite, including its document management system and a Geographic Information System (GIS) for spatial data. GIS data is also valuable during a natural disaster, adding to the need for a safer and more secure solution.

With both compute and disk capacity approaching their limits, the Council's IT team faced a decision to either invest in hardware and refresh its on-premises infrastructure or invest in Azure and move all applications across to the cloud.

Shoalhaven City Council needed a solution that would:

- Improve performance and connectivity across its vast region of 85 sites
- Outsource hosting of server infrastructure to an external provider.
- Find the best option for its production workloads and application hosting
- Consider the full range of costs involved with an Azure migration
- Maintain an agnostic perspective around infrastructure solutions

Based on its excellent reputation, experiences with local government and infrastructure expertise, Shoalhaven City Council turned to Logicalis Australia to outline a solution for Azure migration.

Logicalis and Microsoft: A partnership built on collaboration and expertise

Logicalis and Microsoft have a robust partnership both in Australia and around the world. As a certified Azure Expert Managed Service Provider (MSP), global Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP), and member of the Microsoft Intelligent Security Association (MISA), Logicalis holds five key solution designations in Security, Azure, Data and AI, Digital and App Innovation, and Modern Workplace.

In March 2024, Logicalis earned Microsoft's verified Managed Extended Detection and Response (MXDR) solution status, highlighting its excellence in security and service delivery.

Leveraging these certifications, Logicalis applies its expertise to help clients unlock their potential through Microsoft solutions. The team uses their designations to implement advanced security measures, optimise Azure deployments, enhance data-driven decision-making, innovate digital and app solutions, and modernise workplaces. This partnership ensures customers have access to local and global expertise, guaranteeing quality, assurance, and positive experiences that deliver tangible value to their organisations.

Solution

The Logicalis Australia team began with an initial consulting period for Shoalhaven City Council to assess their environments and existing infrastructure properly. The in-depth analysis mapped out the possible approaches and allowed for a more complete costing of the recommended solution. The cost estimates considered several factors, including licencing, real estate, additional funding, and ongoing monthly costs based on current usage.

According to Dane Hamilton, CIO at Shoalhaven City Council, "Logicalis was able to bring their deep knowledge and experience in the space to present a well-packaged concept. They had a template and a solution design with aspects that had already been implemented elsewhere. We were confident they could deliver the solution and that they didn't miss any aspects in its design."

"Because the Logicalis team works with several other local government organisations, they understood our challenges and who we were as an organisation. They didn't limit their thinking or try to sell us on a single-vendor solution. They deeply understood our industry, which showed in their response."

Before they could move to the cloud-ready framework recommended by Logicalis, the team at Shoalhaven City Council needed to address several aspects of their network and infrastructure to prepare for the shift. This included upgrading internet connectivity at sites and overhauling the network and firewalls design to support a hybrid cloud configuration. While this step was managed internally, having the expertise and guidance of Logicalis and its technical team was invaluable.

Working in an Azure environment was a new experience for the Council's IT team, and they upskilled quickly and received guidance from Logicalis on how to integrate their systems and networks into their Production Ready Cloud Platform landing zone.

Logicalis also introduced and assisted Shoalhaven City Council in gaining funding through Microsoft's investment funding. This funding helped cover some of the initial investment required for the shift to Azure and was pivotal to the Council's decision.

"For anyone considering an Azure migration, my advice is to invest up front in planning and then take the leap! It was daunting when I think back to all the hurdles we faced 12 months ago, but our IT Infrastructure is now in a much stronger place. We are very happy with the outcome. It really has just simplified things for our team. Start by ensuring your internet infrastructure, networks, firewalls and security configurations are planned out well, and the rest will fall into place."

Dane Hamilton
Chief Information Officer, Shoalhaven City Council

Outcome

Despite moving more than 45 Virtual Machines to Azure during the migration, there were no complaints or negative feedback from employees using the systems during the transition.

Recent feedback from Council employees have reported applications perform better in the Azure environment and highlighted increases to speed, particularly with the records management system and SQL databases.

The project has delivered several key benefits:

- **Risk Mitigation** – By shifting its document management and GIS systems to Azure, Shoalhaven City Council has helped to ensure these systems are geographically separated and thereby reducing the risk of being impacted by a disaster.
- **Greater Security & Resiliency** – Shoalhaven City Council's new cloud environment keeps track of all changes. It leverages the latest firewalls and security features to reduce the likelihood and impact of cyber-attacks and internal misconfiguration.
- **Continuous Improvement** – With hundreds of new services released each year, Shoalhaven City Council can now gain access to continual innovation and maintain the agility of their new solution.
- **Centralisation & Visibility** – The new well-governed cloud environment helped to decentralise its IT environment, providing clearer visibility of services used treating costs as an operating expense rather than sporadic capital outlays to renew server infrastructure.
- **High Availability** – Shoalhaven City Council has already experienced a reduction in unplanned downtime instances since moving to Azure.
- **Improved Automation** - Platform and application automation enables better management across IT environments and improved self-service capabilities.

After the project was delivered, the Logicalis team were noted for their adaptability and flexibility in delivering the engagement. The Council team pointed out that the account management and project management from Logicalis was exceptional.

Logicalis Australia was named
Microsoft's 2024 Azure Partner of the Year
for Australia and New Zealand.

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