

Australian City Council Keeps Public Sector Communications and Services Secure With Proofpoint



The Challenge

- Safeguard local government communications from phishing, fraudulent emails and other threats
- Automate manual processes for efficiency
- Strengthen security culture within organisation

The Solution

- Proofpoint Email Protection
- Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection
- Proofpoint Threat Response Auto-Pull
- Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense
- Proofpoint Internal Mail Defense
- Proofpoint Browser Isolation
- Proofpoint CASB
- Proofpoint Security Awareness Training

The Results

- AI-powered email security protects the organisation from malicious attacks
- Reduced email volume by 88%, eliminating attacks and spam
- Accelerated ability to respond to supply chain fraud

The Organisation

With more than 40% of its residents born outside Australia, the city of Maribyrnong is among the country's most diverse. The Maribyrnong City Council celebrates and nurtures this diversity. And it focuses on fostering an inclusive, flourishing and progressive community that cares for its 90,000 residents and its environment.

The City Council supports a wide variety of services and facilities for the local community. It is responsible for roads, parks, waste collection, land use, family support, recreation, events, health and emergency services, and much more. Along with all this responsibility, the Council also knows the importance of protecting its people and data.

The Challenge

Stopping increasingly user-targeted threats

To support all of its services, 650 users at the Council rely on an infrastructure hosting approximately 120 servers. Like every organisation, the Council takes cybersecurity extremely seriously. The threat landscape is evolving, and email fraud and supply chain attacks are becoming a growing concern. In June 2021, the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), reported more than 3,300 incidents of business email compromise over the previous 12 months.

"The threat landscape has become much worse, and attackers are no longer targeting the firewall and the network, but our users," said Mark Bretherton, network infrastructure coordinator at Maribyrnong City Council.

As the IT team evaluated its security posture, they realised that their environment focused on perimeter security. But it offered little protection against business email compromise (BEC) attacks. The Council was seeking a comprehensive approach to security that could protect its users from these sophisticated threats, as well as credential phishing, account compromise, and ransomware. And like many organisations, the Council is migrating its applications to cloud services. This means the IT team also needs to improve insight into its cloud security posture.

The Solution

Comprehensive email security and data loss prevention

After considering solutions from a variety of vendors, Maribyrnong City Council chose Proofpoint. The Council deployed a broad set of solutions based on the Proofpoint Threat Protection Platform. The Proofpoint Email Protection email gateway uses advanced machine learning technology to classify, detect and block suspicious email. What's more, this solution works with Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection (TAP), which spots ransomware and other advanced email threats delivered via attachments and URLs.

"Most of our attacks are credential theft, such as banking Trojans and similar attacks," said Bretherton. "We're successfully preventing them, but it is very valuable to have the TAP dashboard data. It allows us to see what the top threats are, and what types of decisions our solution is making to stop them."

"To my knowledge, since we put in the Proofpoint suite we've never been breached, and we've never had anything run amok inside our network. With Proofpoint, I have peace of mind in knowing the solution is doing a really good job stopping the latest threats."

Mark Bretherton, network infrastructure coordinator, Maribyrnong City Council

The Council also deployed Proofpoint Threat Response Auto-Pull (TRAP). This enables Bretherton and his team to analyse emails and quarantine malicious or unwanted emails after they are delivered.

To help support its strategic cloud initiative, the Council deployed Proofpoint Cloud App Security Broker (Proofpoint CASB). This solution helps the team gain better visibility and control over cloud apps, so they can deploy cloud services with more confidence.

"Proofpoint CASB is showing us what sorts of things people are accessing through Microsoft Azure and through our authentication systems," said Bretherton. "It's giving us some good metrics on what people are up to."

Bretherton follows the best practices recommended by the Australian Cyber Security Centre. He also understands that digital threats not only attack users through corporate work emails. They also face threats when they are personally browsing from devices in the office. Proofpoint Browser Isolation lets Council users browse the web while preventing malicious content from impacting their office devices. The solution also offers customisable web isolation based on TAP intelligence.

The Results

Stopping email fraud and gaining cloud visibility

Proofpoint Email Protection delivered immediate results in helping the Council minimise unwanted and malicious emails. According to a recent report, Email Protection, together with TAP and TRAP, stopped more than 88% of incoming emails. This includes threats like phishing, virus, spam, impostor emails, and threats based on IP reputation. The solution not only provides automated, intelligent email security, but visibility into threats for Bretherton and his team. A recent report showed that TAP was 99.7% effective over a 90-day period.

“The TAP dashboard is terrific, and we have also implemented TRAP,” said Bretherton. “A couple of times a week someone clicks a malicious link, something slips through, and those emails are removed. Every time I receive an alert I’m so thankful that we’ve got TRAP and TAP in place, because they do a really good job stopping the threats.”

Proofpoint has enabled the Council to not only strengthen security, but free up time for IT by eliminating unwanted emails.

“When we set up the Proofpoint Email Gateway and implemented the DMARC controls, the solution reduced our rubbish rate by about 40%,” said Bretherton.

The solution has also been effective at helping the Council respond to BEC and supply chain fraud more quickly.

“There was one occasion where the fraudster made the mistake of sending a purchase order to a local supplier who knew our buying habits, and rang me up to confirm the transaction,” explained Bretherton. “We examined the email and found that the attacker had registered a lookalike domain that was very similar to ours. Using the Proofpoint platform, we issued a takedown request, and that is not a problem anymore.”

Proofpoint Browser Isolation capabilities also protect the organisation from web-based threats. At the same time, it gives staff the flexibility to stay productive and work together with the local community.

“Our firewall classifies websites in categories, but many sites for local businesses and artists are new. This means we can’t always tell if they are malicious or not,” said Bretherton. “In the past, we would often have to manually evaluate them to determine if they were safe. Proofpoint Browser Isolation is terrific because it lets us give our users access to these uncategorised sites in a customised way. We’ve written a policy that lets our users look at the content, but they can’t enter data, so they are protected.”

Backed by the comprehensive Proofpoint Threat Protection Platform, the Maribyrnong City Council can now spend less time worrying about securing its operations, and more time serving its community.

LEARN MORE

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Proofpoint, Inc. is a leading cybersecurity and compliance company that protects organisations’ greatest assets and biggest risks: their people. With an integrated suite of cloud-based solutions, Proofpoint helps companies around the world stop targeted threats, safeguard their data and make their users more resilient against cyber attacks. Leading organisations of all sizes, including 75 percent of the Fortune 100, rely on Proofpoint for people-centric security and compliance solutions that mitigate their most critical risks across email, the cloud, social media and the web. More information is available at www.proofpoint.com.

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