

Devonport City Council

Blazing the eInvoicing trail for all Australian Councils!

OVERVIEW

The Australian Government has been transparent about its plans to uplift the economy by encouraging and supporting the use of eInvoicing, with the intention to eliminate time-wasting manual processes and reduce vulnerability towards data security threats.

The ATO (Australian Taxation Office) which is appointed by the government to be responsible for regulating the eInvoicing network (Peppol) within the country, always has and continues to strongly encourage all levels of government entities to become eInvoicing-ready.

Devonport City Council was the first major Local Government to take this step, building on its reputation as a forward-thinking organisation.



OBJECTIVES

Devonport City Council started its digital transformation journey as early as 2018 and eInvoicing was considered in 2021 - as part of a larger Accounts Payable automation project.

After deciding to adopt eInvoicing and join the Peppol network, the Council had the following objectives outlined:

- Automate everything that can be automated
- Utilise a secure eInvoicing network to exchange invoices
- Enable faster payments for suppliers
- Enable time and cost efficiencies via improved processes
- Ensure all invoices go through one pipeline and are accepted into one system
- Onboard all suppliers via Peppol to maximise the utilisation of digital solutions together
- Ensure a high-quality service is provided to the community, enabling local suppliers to enjoy a positive impact as the Council's trading partners

- The eInvoicing service and Access Point provider's previous experience with government organisations and government ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems
- The standard process for the Accounts Payable and payments used by the service provider

**LinkFor's recognised relationship with the ATO was also one of the reasons that ensured Devonport City Council chose LinkFor as their eInvoicing service provider.*

THE SOLUTION

Devonport City Council chose the LinkFor eInvoicing solution for the Government Sector - a widely used solution within government organisations in Australia.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

After the Council had its business case approved in late 2021, the configuration of the solution was completed by February 2022. Extensive testing was carried out through March - April 2022.

During the implementation, LinkFor delivered eInvoices between BOC Gas and the Devonport City Council, opening doors for all of the Council's suppliers to send them eInvoices - provided they too were part of the eInvoicing network (Peppol).

In addition, the Council sets up fortnightly meetings (vendors included) as well as ad hoc sessions as and when required, which were vital throughout the project period.

GOING LIVE **(WITH EINVOICING)**

The Tasmanian council partnered with leading Access Point Provider LinkFor and went live with eInvoicing in May 2022. Invoices were swiftly delivered to the Council's ERP platform TechnologyOne.

Devonport City Council also involved EzeScan to implement its Cloud Invoice Data Entry solution to leverage the platform's OCR capabilities (i.e. capture data off PDFs).

In addition, LinkFor organised training sessions for the Devonport City Council team in order to introduce eInvoicing and how it can best utilise the solution to benefit both the Council and its suppliers.

Post going live, a lessons-learnt meeting was held by the Council, which included vendors as well. This session provided useful feedback for both Devonport City Council and its vendors which could be used in future projects.

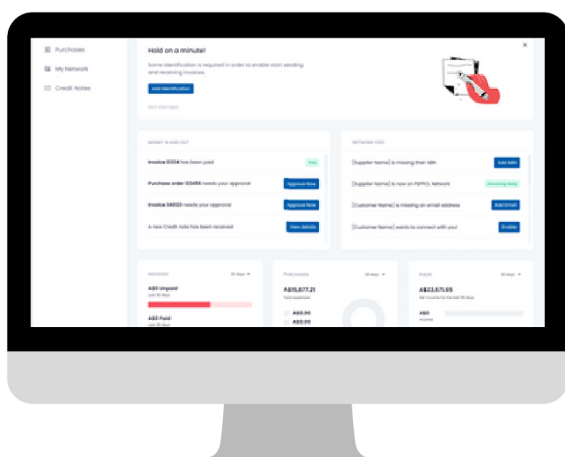
Through LinkFor, the Devonport City Council was able to discover how many suppliers were already eInvoicing-ready. This super novel feature which is only offered by LinkFor allowed Devonport City Council to easily identify which suppliers are on the eInvoicing network (Peppol) and immediately start receiving eInvoices.

CHALLENGES

With approximately 7000 invoices being processed on average per year, the Devonport City Council was determined to address the countless administrative issues, the prolonging processes and the inefficiencies traditional invoicing causes by taking steps to become eInvoicing-ready.

The main challenges the Council anticipated from the transition to eInvoicing were:

- The ability of vendors to commit capable and sufficient resources
- Sufficient time and resources to effectively train their employees
- Using new systems and processes and helping staff overcome the resistance to change
- Using suitable system configurations to support new processes and ensuring Devonport City Council achieves its aims



SOLUTION

PREPARATION FOR TRANSITION

Devonport City Council began its eInvoicing journey as it does with most projects by leveraging the services of the PMO (Project Management Office) to capture the functional requirements first.

During preparation, the Council also conducted:

- Benefits workshops
- Financial analysis
- Risk workshops
- Change management workshops

As such, a Project Team was set up to analyse and understand the processes and the requirements of the stakeholders.

Another critical step was setting up communication channels between the vendors and all other stakeholders involved.

Main aspects that were originally considered when choosing an eInvoicing service provider included:

- Cost-effectiveness - the number of invoices Devonport City Council receives via eInvoicing was very low (initially), therefore any investment made for transitioning to eInvoicing needed to be reasonable

For those that were not part of the network, the Council easily invite them to join with a simple click of a button from the LinkFor Dashboard.

LinkFor also assisted Devonport City Council to onboard its suppliers to the eInvoicing network (Peppol) where LinkFor carried out a customised campaign to encourage identified council trading partners to adopt eInvoicing.

Additionally, a survey was utilised to identify which accounting systems were being used by their suppliers to help them with the steps needed to activate eInvoicing either using LinkFor or in their systems.

Other services provided by LinkFor included the preparation of an eInvoicing Readiness Report, which identifies which of the Council suppliers are eInvoicing-ready and developing a Knowledge Landing Page, which includes all information required for the Council suppliers to join the eInvoicing network (Peppol).

WHAT IS NEXT FOR DEVONPORT CITY COUNCIL?

The next stages the Council has to focus on after the successful transition are:

- Manage the relevant internal systems to ensure they are continuing to work seamlessly
- Ensure all invoices are coming into their system electronically
- Maintain workflow approvals and ensure Purchase Orders (PO)/Goods Receipt (GR) matching is working smoothly

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- Successfully complete the supplier onboarding process to the eInvoicing network with the support of LinkFor

BENEFITS

FINANCIAL BENEFITS THE COUNCIL IS ABLE TO EXPERIENCE INCLUDE:

- Saving time and cutting costs on manual entry
- Reducing time and cost in following up on invoices, trying to get approvals, etc.

OTHER BENEFITS THE COUNCIL IS EXPERIENCING BY ADOPTING EINVOICING INCLUDE:

- An environmentally friendly process - eInvoicing saves paper and energy
- Lowering the risk of fraudulent activities and email scams, like payment redirection scams
- Allowing staff to focus on more interesting and productive work
- Increasing capacity
- Enabling remote work
- Opportunity to reallocate labour to higher-value tasks



CONCLUSION

Through ...

- *Careful pre-planning*
- *Implementing team training sessions and workshops*
- *Ensuring a Project Management Team is put in place to keep the project on track and under the outlined deadlines*
- *Maintaining clear communication channels between all teams and stakeholder parties involved - throughout the project and afterwards*
- *Consistent cooperation of all parties involved (LinkFor, TechnologyOne, EzeScan)*

Enabled ...

Devonport City Council to emerge as the first of many local authorities to adopt eInvoicing!



LinkFor being the Council's eInvoicing service provider, was also the first Access Point provider to send eInvoices into TechnologyOne via EzeScan.

In addition, the ATO team's involvement from the very start adds further value to the uniqueness of this project.

Overall, the strong partnership between LinkFor and all other collaborators involved, enabled Devonport City Council to streamline its invoicing process, accept one flow of invoices no matter the type, and complete the mission as planned from start to finish.

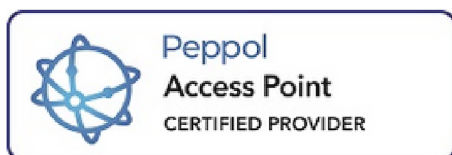
ABOUT LINKFOR

LinkFor is an award-winning, ATO and Australian Peppol Authority accredited Service Provider and Access Point that revolutionised the Procure-to-Pay sector by providing seamless eInvoicing services throughout Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

LinkFor provides seamless invoice delivery via a quick and secure connection for Cloud Accounting and ERP systems. LinkFor is designed to add-on to your current Accounting software or integrate with your existing ERP system and enhance their invoicing capabilities.

No matter which Accounting software you are using, LinkFor enables users to send invoices directly and instantly into their trading partners' Accounting systems.

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