

PUBLIC ACCESS TO LEGISLATION (PAL) PROJECT

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

What is the PAL project?

The Public Access to Legislation (PAL) project is designed to improve the way in which New Zealand legislation (Bills, Acts, Statutory Regulations, and Supplementary Order Papers (SOPs)) is made available to the public. The aim of the project is to provide public access to up-to-date official legislation in both printed and electronic form. Electronic versions will be available free via the Internet.

The project involves the implementation of an XML-based drafting and publishing system in the PCO, and a website providing free public access to Bills, Acts, Statutory Regulations, and SOPs.

What caused the project to be delayed?

Testing of the PAL system in early 2003 identified some format and layout issues, as well as some systems issues, that required further work before the new PAL system could be implemented. These included-

- Generation of Bills with line numbers
- Time taken to render large documents in a printed format
- Correct formatting of revision-tracked Bills.

While the PCO and Unisys worked together to identify the work required to enable the PAL system to be implemented, they were unable to agree on the commercial basis on which the project could be completed.

In May 2003, Ministers therefore directed that an independent technical review of the PAL solution be carried out to obtain independent assurance that the PAL system would be operationally stable, maintainable, and capable of future enhancement and development.

What was the outcome of the technical review?

A technical review of the PAL system was undertaken by Dr Timothy Arnold-Moore from InQuirion (a Melbourne-based firm), who concluded that the PAL system is generally sound, and that if certain issues identified in the review report and separately by the PCO and Unisys are addressed, the New

Zealand Government could confidently deploy the PAL solution. In addition, InQuirion subsequently carried out an evaluation of alternative print rendering engines, and concluded that, with an upgrade to the latest version of the existing Arbortext print rendering engine (E3), the current technology is capable of supporting the PCO's requirements for print rendering.

Why did commercial negotiations take so long?

The Technical Review report was completed at the end of October 2003. Ministers then directed the PCO (together with Treasury and SSC officials) to undertake discussions with Unisys in order to establish whether or not there was scope for agreement on mutually satisfactory terms and conditions (including price) for Unisys to complete the project.

In late December 2003, the PCO requested Unisys to provide a proposal to complete the project so as to provide the basis on which Ministers could make further decisions on the future of the project.

The PCO subsequently worked with Unisys in the development of its proposal. The work proceeded in 2 stages: technical and commercial.

The first stage focused on technical matters, with the primary focus on confirming that Unisys was able to deliver a technology solution that would meet the PCO's requirements, and would be robust, supportable, and maintainable by the PCO in the long term, and on a cost-effective basis. This work included-

- The evaluation of alternative print rendering engines undertaken by InQuirion. This work was not completed until early May 2004
- A review of the key components of the PAL solution, given the period of time that had elapsed since the selection of the original software components of the PAL solution, and the design of the overall system
- Applying the lessons learnt in the project to date in planning the approach to the design, development, and testing of those components of the solution where further work is required.

The second stage involved commercial negotiations between the PCO and Unisys on the basis on which the project could be completed. This work included-

- Negotiations on the terms and conditions on which the Crown and Unisys could complete the project, including how any additional costs would be borne
- Negotiation of ongoing support arrangements for the PAL system, including arrangements for the housing of the system and ongoing maintenance, support, and enhancements

- Negotiation of a contractual variation to the original PCO/Unisys PAL contract
- Independent quality assurance of the Unisys proposal to complete the project
- Obtaining final Cabinet approval of the agreement reached between the PCO and Unisys, and of additional funding to complete the project and for the costs of the ongoing support of the new PAL system.

What is involved in completing the project?

The following work is required to complete and implement the new PAL system:

- the development of a comprehensive set of print output specifications and example documents for use in design, development, and testing, as recommended by InQuirion in its evaluation of alternative print rendering engines
- the development of a comprehensive functional specification that integrates the original user requirements and functional specification documents, the original design documents, and functional requirements subsequently identified as a result of the testing of the PAL solution and the undertaking by InQuirion of the technical review and evaluation of alternative print rendering engines
- upgrades to the existing technology solution as a result of recommendations from the technical review and the subsequent evaluation of alternative print rendering engines. This involves an upgrade to the latest version of the current print rendering engine (ie, from Arbortext Print Composer to Arbortext E3)
- upgrades to the existing technology solution as a result of the period of time that has elapsed since the selection of the original software components of the PAL solution, and the design of the overall system. The PCO and Unisys have reviewed the other key components of the technology solution and the ability of the solution as a whole to meet the PCO's business requirements. This review has identified opportunities to upgrade to the latest versions of key software components such as the content management system (Documentum)
- A "proof of concept" exercise for key technology components highlighted during the technical review of the PAL system (eg print rendering engine). This is being done to ensure that the proposed technology is capable of meeting the PCO's requirements for the PAL system
- design and development work arising out of the recommendations of the InQuirion technical review, the decision to upgrade certain components of

the PAL solution, the need to resolve the problems identified during user acceptance testing of the system in early 2003, and the deferral of work on certain components of the PAL solution as a result of the decision in 2003 not to put the system into live production

- a comprehensive test programme, including systems testing, performance and stress testing, and user acceptance testing
- further training of PCO, Office of the Clerk, and Inland Revenue Department Tax Drafting Unit staff before implementation of the system in live production.

How will the PCO and Unisys ensure that the project will now be successfully completed?

In any complex IT project, it is not possible to eliminate every risk. The key areas of technical risk for the project relate to the integration and customisation of the base technologies, the capacity of the technology to deliver the PCO's business requirements, and system performance. The Technical Review confirmed the soundness of the PAL system, and the subsequent evaluation of alternative print rendering engines concluded that, with an upgrade to the latest version of the existing Arbortext print rendering engine, the current technology is capable of supporting the PCO's requirements for print rendering. In addition, a great deal of knowledge and experience of the technologies has already been gained by Unisys and the PCO.

The following activities are the first project tasks and will be conducted in parallel:

- A print output specification (which sets out a complete statement of the format of New Zealand legislation that the new PAL system must produce) will be developed
- The existing user requirements and functional specification, together with requirements, issues, and defects identified during subsequent testing of the current PAL system, the technical review, and evaluation of alternative print rendering engines, will be incorporated into a comprehensive functional specification
- A "proof of concept" exercise for key technology components highlighted during the technical review of the PAL system will be undertaken, to ensure that the proposed technology is capable of meeting the PCO's requirements for the PAL system.

A "spotlight review" will be undertaken once the proof of concept and print output and functional specification work is completed. The purpose of this review is to review the effort, deliverables, and timetable required to complete the project, and confirm or amend them as appropriate. Additional formal

reviews will be conducted at key points in the project to review progress, tasks, and timeframes.

System performance will be actively monitored and managed during the remainder of the project. Unisys has agreed that the PAL system will meet a set of pre-determined key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of overall system acceptance. The achievement of these targets will be assessed during the life of the project at various key points during the development and build of the system. Functional performance and stress and load performance will be tested during the comprehensive test programme and form part of Systems Integration Testing and User Acceptance Testing.

Project governance and project management arrangements are as follows:

- A project steering committee will be chaired by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, and include representatives from the PCO and Unisys, the Office of the Clerk, and the Inland Revenue Department, together with 2 additional members with IT project management and government agency experience
- Regular meetings will be held with SSC and Treasury officials as part of the Government Major IT Projects Monitoring Regime
- Opticon New Zealand will provide an experienced IT project manager to provide project management services to the PCO for the remainder of the PAL Project
- Experienced resources will be contracted to assist the PCO during Systems Integration Testing and User Acceptance Testing
- A PCO expert in legislation and prepublication will be based at Unisys for much of the project, and work closely with the Unisys project team during the requirements consolidation and testing stages of the project
- Independent quality assurance services will provide an ongoing monthly project management health check and regular reporting to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and the project steering committee
- An independent technical expert will review the requirements consolidation documents, and provide ongoing technical advice and assistance to the PCO.

Have the PCO and Unisys considered simplifying the system?

The PCO and Unisys have agreed on a process to identify and evaluate opportunities to standardize and simplify both the legislation output format requirements and functional requirements of the PAL system, with the aim of minimizing the need for customisation of the PAL system software, reduce

system complexity, and facilitate the ongoing management and support of the PAL system.

An expert panel that includes overseas experts in legislative drafting systems will be available to provide advice on the resolution of complex formatting and functional requirements for the PAL system.

It must be recognised that the opportunities to standardise and simplify are constrained by a number of factors, including the requirements of the House and the legislative process, good drafting practice, and historical formatting and layout conventions contained in the large body of legislation built up over the last 150 years.

What is the intended project completion date?

The current project plan indicates that Unisys will complete the PAL Project by the last quarter of 2006. However, the timing of the introduction of the new PAL system also needs to take into account the Parliamentary sitting programme and the impact of the introduction of the new systems and processes on the day-to-day operations of the PCO and the Office of the Clerk.