

PRESENTATION TO Launch of Victoria's Topographic Mapping Program – 4 November 2009

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Introduction

- Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.
- I'm Ollie Hedberg, Chair of the Victorian Spatial Council.
- The Council has been around for 5 years now and one of its roles is to be a champion of major spatial information initiatives.

Significance of the occasion

- So, it is a pleasure to welcome you all here this afternoon to formally recognise a significant milestone for mapping in Victoria – completion of the updating of the entire series of the State's Topographic Maps.
- This achievement is the culmination of a five year program to update 238 1:50,000 scale topographic map sheets.
- New and updated hardcopy maps have been produced since July 2006, while digital maps have been available since 2004.
- This event is also significant because we have the opportunity to recognise the important role that the mapping user community played as a catalyst for the introduction of the program.

- It was in response to concerns from a wide group of stakeholders and users about the quality of the maps and the need for up to date and accurate mapping that the program began.

History – including review of Survey and Spatial information, GIRG forum

- First some history about Victoria’s topographic maps.
- The first series of map sheets were completed in the 1970s and early 1980s.
- 1,600 1:25,000 scale maps were the mainstay of this series.
- But by early 2003 many of them were anywhere between 10 and 30 years out of date.
- Also in that year, the *Review into Survey and Spatial Information* that I chaired released its final report.
- My colleagues and I recommended that ‘the State-wide mapping program should be reconstituted due to the prevalence of out-of-date maps and emerging Government liabilities’.
- We heard from many stakeholders about their expectations for readily available up to date printed maps.
- Victoria’s Emergency Services indicated that they were using and buying the out of date maps to enable them to maintain quick response times.
- The map resellers were obtaining maps from various other sources, such as the CFA, so they could sell up to date maps.
- Some Local Governments were even printing maps on demand.

- In late 2003, the VSC's predecessor, the *Geospatial Information Reference Group*, followed that recommendation up with a public forum that reiterated the need for up to date topographic maps.
- The then Chairman of GIRG, Mr Chris Reynolds, wrote to the Secretary of DSE, who responded by requesting that Spatial Information Infrastructure examine ways to cost effectively update the maps.
- In planning its response, the Department recognised that it would never again be feasible to produce hardcopy maps with the traditional methods.
- Using these methods, it would take 30 full time equivalent staff 6 to 8 weeks to produce each map.
- At that rate, it would take between nine and thirteen years and cost \$48 million to update the whole series of 1:25,000 scale maps that were the foundations of the map series.
- So a new approach had to be adopted.
- While the hard copy maps were out of date however, the digital information that underpinned the maps was fully up to date.
- This provided a solid foundation for the production of new topographic maps.

What the program now makes possible

- The first product to be produced by the Program was the 1:30,000 scale A4 maps, available for purchase on-line.

- This series became available in May 2004.
- Vicmap, the State's digital map base, was used to create the on-line maps.
- They are delivered in PDF format, meaning anyone with a standard printer can obtain a map in the comfort of their own home.
- Further, they are produced entirely automatically.
- In the past, production of the maps was done manually to carefully place text to ensure legibility.
- The new automated map process can create the maps without the need for manual placement of text, saving time and money in production.
- Victoria is now recognised as an innovator and leader in the area of automated topographic mapping.
- Its model is emulated by Governments across Australia, and also some international mapping jurisdictions.
- The Vicmap Topographic 1:30,000 on-line mapping series also took out the prestigious international **Exemplary Systems in Government Award** from URISA in November 2004.
- The Program is now delivered using far fewer resources – three FTE staff and an annual budget of \$150,000 – due to the new processes and the latest technology being used by DSE.
- And each new map sheet is now created in an average of three days.

- With the completion of the replacement of all outdated maps, the Program will move to the next phase – which is updating and maintaining the map sheets, with the aim to ensure no map sheet will be more than 5 years old.
- At the same time, DSE will have the capacity to update maps on demand when necessary, for example during emergency response and recovery.
- New products will also continue to be developed, with the first one being a 1:25,000 scale series of maps over selected areas of the State that will be able to present more detailed data over popular national parks and major regional centres.
- On that note, I'm sure that you will join me in congratulating the Topographic Mapping team for the success of the Program.

Other outcomes of the initial GIRG forum – the Vicmap Books, a new partnership

- In conclusion, DSE's search for new ways to produce up to date topographic maps has had other spin off benefits.
- A further outcome of the GIRG forum was the release of an Expression of Interest seeking innovative proposals from the private sector to partner with the Government in providing new published mapping products.
- One result has been the Vicmap books – a partnership between DSE, the Country Fire Authority and Spatial Vision.

- This State-wide series comprises 5 books, which are updated every two years.
- The maps include standard topographic information themes using the latest Vicmap data.
- CFA volunteers and other users of the map books contribute significantly to the partnership by providing feedback on the currency of data contained in the books through a formal notification process.
- The updates are reflected both in the digital datasets – immediately – and in each new edition of the books.
- I congratulate DSE, CFA and Spatial Vision on their commitment to this initiative, and for the goodwill shown by all parties as the project has been through some ups and downs in its early years.
- The benefits are already being felt as many hundreds of improvements to the data have been made as a result of the ongoing feedback received.
- The entire topographic mapping initiative has been an example of what can be achieved by an engaged constituency of stakeholders who make their voices heard, and by the willingness of government to partner with them to develop innovative solutions.
- I congratulate everyone who has been involved.