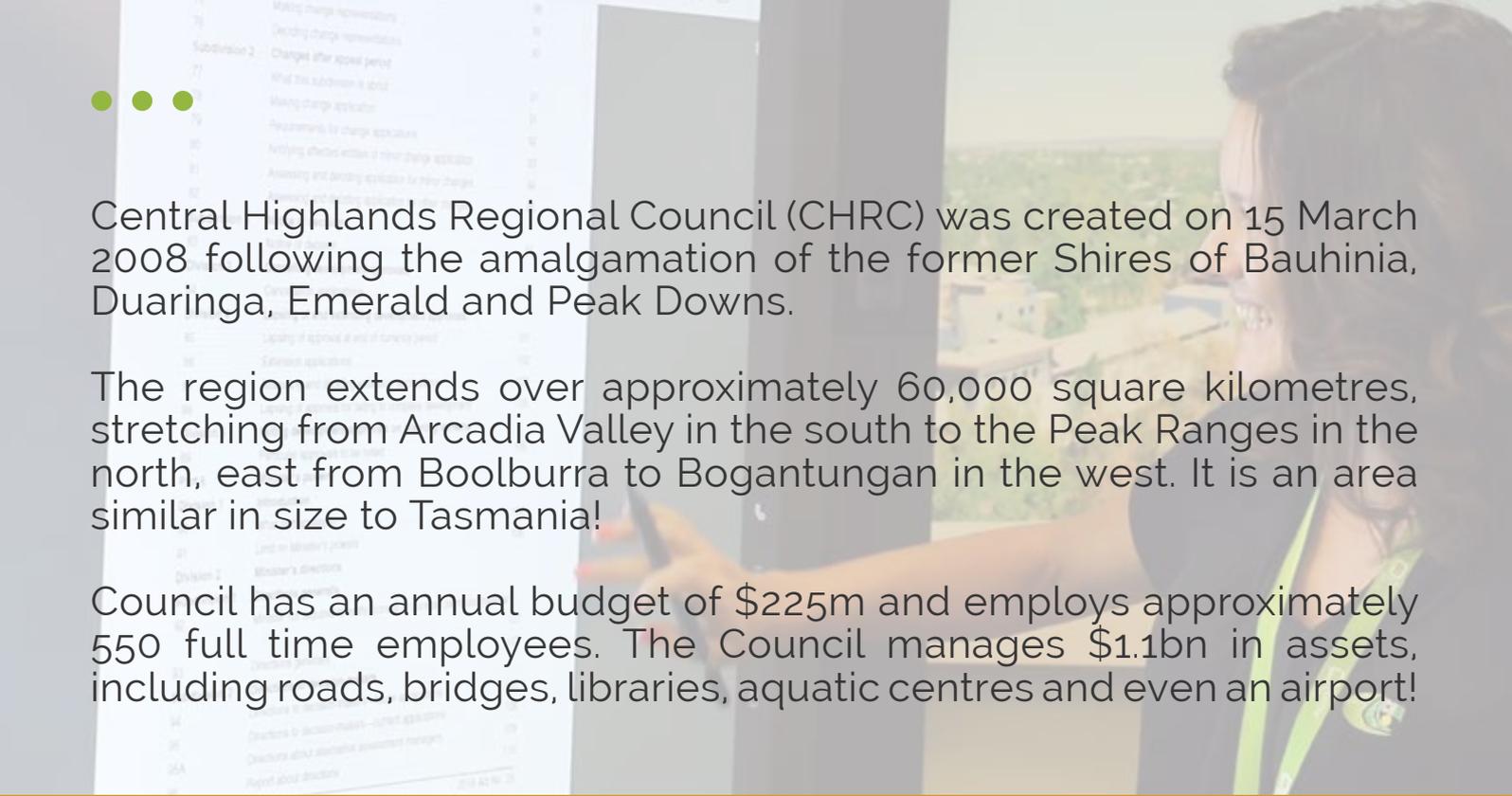


# Staying Secure, Protecting Ratepayer Data & Funds

- An obligation to protect both staff, infrastructure and assets that they administer on behalf of the region lay behind Central Highlands Regional Council's (CHRC) decision to overhaul their systems.
- The implementation of M365 Secure provides an end to end managed solution focusing on security in Microsoft 365
- M365 Secure enables active monitoring of CHRC's Microsoft environment providing daily security alerts, triage, investigation & resolution guidance and/or implementation.



Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) was created on 15 March 2008 following the amalgamation of the former Shires of Bauhinia, Duaringa, Emerald and Peak Downs.

The region extends over approximately 60,000 square kilometres, stretching from Arcadia Valley in the south to the Peak Ranges in the north, east from Boolburra to Bogantungan in the west. It is an area similar in size to Tasmania!

Council has an annual budget of \$225m and employs approximately 550 full time employees. The Council manages \$1.1bn in assets, including roads, bridges, libraries, aquatic centres and even an airport!

## **Wanted: An uplift in security controls, process and managed services**

With these kinds of financial investments and managing the day to day business of maintaining, repairing and improving the region – Council takes the security, governance and compliance relating to ratepayer funds seriously. There has been numerous stories in recent years about various Councils across Queensland and beyond being breached by poor security controls, human error and or lack of process regarding financial transactions. Typically most of these are spray and pray attacks, using fairly common techniques for breaching organisations and in most cases are delivered straight through the front door via email.

Insync's professionalism and dedication to our account has been exceptional and Central Highlands Regional Council would highly recommend Insync Technology for Managed Security Services.



**Michael Basher** Acting IS Manager,  
Central Highlands Regional Council

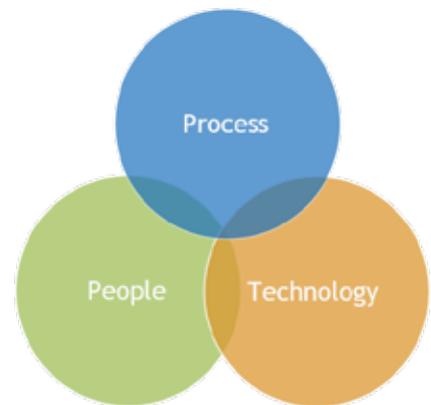


## Understanding the Councils infrastructure positioning for effective implementation

Central Highlands have an obligation to protect both staff, infrastructure and assets that they administer on behalf of the region – so looked to long time Microsoft consulting partner and managed services provider, Insync Technology "Insync" to assist with an uplift in security controls, process and managed services to assist with monitoring, triaging and responding to an increase in cyber attacks that most organisations in Australia are receiving every single day.

### UNNAMED COUNCIL EXAMPLE

- Account email compromised
- Bad actors observed mail account and invoice load
- Spoofed supplier with large invoice to change payment details
- Council lost \$50K



Organisational ICT Security components

Any security partner or solution can be effective but let down by any of the other 2 parts of the equation. It was important that any service or solution delivered incorporated controls and procedures for both People and Process.

Insync firstly had a great understanding of the Councils infrastructure position but needed to understand the user component as ensuring staff and users could cope with additional security controls and processes to ensure fidelity of Councils systems and to prevent attacks or penetrations.





## Key Outcomes

Council was in a reasonable position already, having migrated a large amount of core identity and productivity workloads to Microsoft 365, an early adopter of the Insync "Modern Connected Council" framework. This included email, document collaboration, communication and conferencing tools. It was already a voracious user of meeting and calling software from Microsoft as this was the way most staff and ratepayers interacted. It really needed a service that would build on top of their existing investments, not overburden end users with laborious controls (reducing productivity and increasing frustration) but provide end to end security across cloud, on-premises and mobile computing infrastructure.

Insync worked with Council to deploy its M365 Secure solution, an end to end managed solution focusing on security in Microsoft 365. M365 Secure brings together key components of the Microsoft 365 security platform, combined with effective human oversight and monitoring to triage and respond to critical incidents. M365 Secure works either in an complete outsource model, or a augmentation model to an existing customer cybersecurity team.

### M365 Secure combines:

- **Microsoft Defender Advanced Threat Protection** for endpoint detection & response, automated triage and self-healing capabilities
- **Microsoft Azure Security Centre** for managing security on cloud infrastructure, whether its in Microsoft Azure, AWS or on-premises compute
- **Azure Sentinel** – to ingest logs, events and other data to develop insights and analytics for security incidents across the organisation
- **Managed virtual Security Operations Centre (vSOC)** where customer events and alerts are triaged in real time by our time and updates provided in a transparent and open way



This service has allowed us to proactively manage of our Microsoft services and provide assurance to our organisation regarding the integrity of our Microsoft environment.

**Michael Basher** Acting IS Manager,  
Central Highlands Regional Council





## Plans for the future

Security posture is nothing without informing and enforcing process with regards to business activities. Sensitive information or finances generally have strict procedures regarding distribution of information or funds, and it's important to augment these processes such as:

- Double-checking payment details and confirming these via methods like phone calls or a second source of trust (e.g. Bank or other)
- Establishing a process for changing of personal or bank details that doesn't rely purely on electronic means which can be faked
- Confirming with people of influence that there will be additional steps taken to verify instructions out of the ordinary – not to be the “Business Prevention Unit” but to validate and confirm activities

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Central Highlands Regional Council have utilised the M365 Secure service from Insync Technology for a period of 18 months. The services have included active monitoring of our Microsoft environment, providing daily security alerts, triage, investigation & resolution guidance and/or implementation. Through this service, Insync have also maintained a high focus on mentoring and training for our team which further enhances our internal capabilities.

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