Brief Connect

A secure, cloud-based workflow and approvals platform, built for government.

Powered by

ENGAGE SQUARED

Welcome Ben Smith

We are Engage Squared.

Specialists in **<people> friendly technology.**

Our mission is to make work better. We empower employees to enjoy work more - using Microsoft tools to make work more productive, collaborative and connected.

We work with large organisations to:

- **enable teams and individuals** to adopt new ways of working through our organisational change and transformation campaigns;

- help leaders, communications, and HR teams to **uplift culture and engage staff** by building integrated digital workplaces that use the latest features in SharePoint Online and the Microsoft Viva suite;

- create a more **secure and compliant environment** to better manage, retain and protect their information landscape; and

- **boost productivity** with AI, automation, digitization, and app modernisation (using all of the Microsoft 365 suite, including Copilot, Teams, PowerApps and Power Automate on M365 and D365).

From design, to technical build, our team of experts use their broad range of skills across project delivery, cloud strategy, user experience design, governance, agile development, change management, and security to help our clients get the most of technology.

We take partnerships seriously and were proud to be named Microsoft's Global Partner of the Year for Employee Experience in 2022.
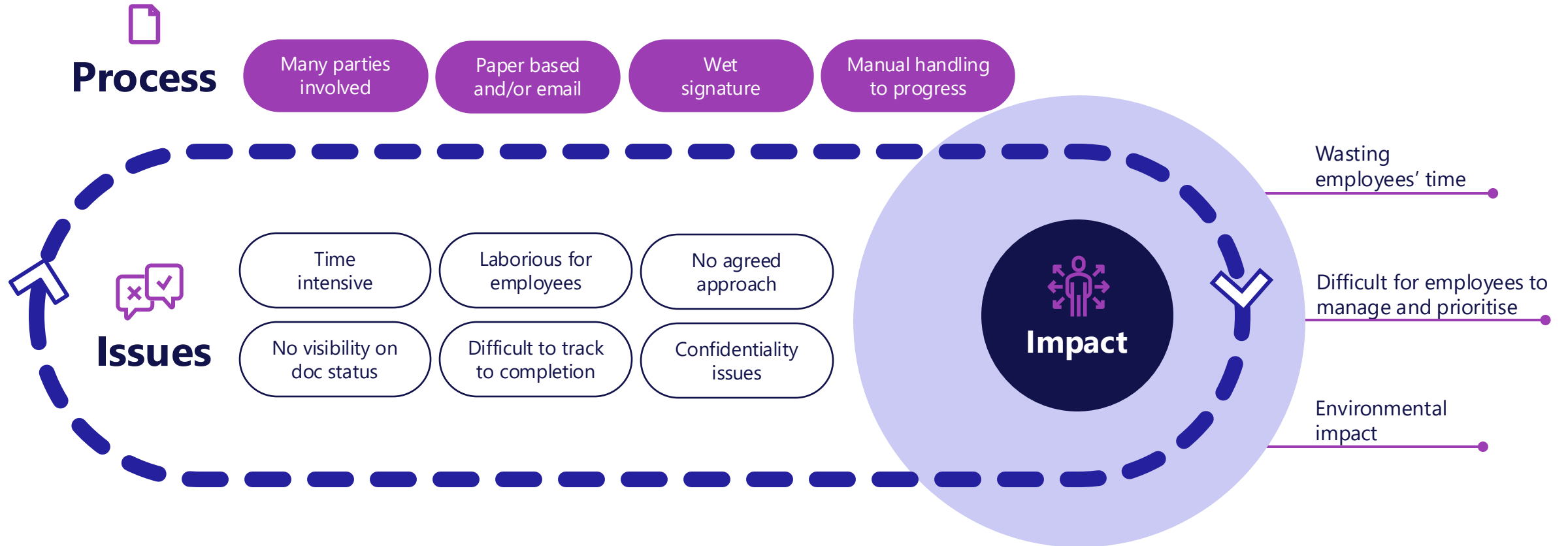
Microsoft Partner
2022 Partner of the Year Winner
Employee Experience Award
2021 Partner of the Year Winner
Australia
Microsoft

Microsoft Solutions Partner
Modern Work
Data & AI
Digital & App Innovation

Microsoft Preferred
Business Applications

Microsoft Preferred
Content Services

CHANGE PRACTITIONER
Prosci CERTIFIED

Microsoft Teams
Collaboration Specialist

Common government challenges

Process

- Many parties involved
- Paper based and/or email
- Wet signature
- Manual handling to progress

Issues

- Time intensive
- Laborious for employees
- No agreed approach
- No visibility on doc status
- Difficult to track to completion
- Confidentiality issues

Impact

- Wasting employees' time
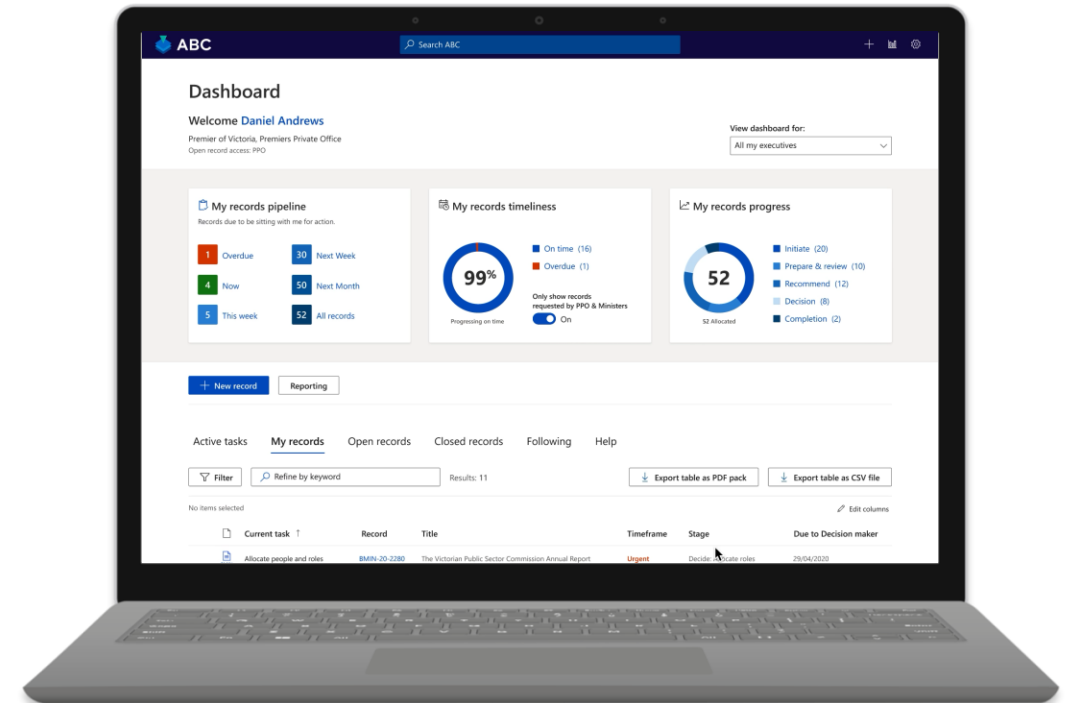- Difficult for employees to manage and prioritise
- Environmental impact

Brief Connect

What is Brief Connect?

We designed Brief Connect to tackle the complex challenges of briefing and correspondence within government departments.

Brief Connect is a modern workflow and approvals platform, co-designed with our government department partners, that streamlines the briefing and correspondence process.

Cabinet

Ministers and the Premier

Ministerial Staff

Secretary / Director General, Dep, Secretaries / DDG and Directors

Cabinet and Ministerial Support Officers

Departmental Liaison Officers

Policy Officer and SMEs

Technology Services

Records Managers and Compliance Officers

Cross-Department Collaboration

External Stakeholder Consultation

Brief Connect

Brief Connect

Key features

Provide accurate advice more quickly

- Reduce manual handling of paper documents (and human errors)
- Simplify and standardise your ways of working throughout the department
- Collaborate with colleagues in real-time with co-authoring
- Upload attachments and supporting documentation
- Streamline responses with standard templates from a central library

Transparent record activity

- Activity timelines in the app show the active stage of the record and who it is sitting with
- Access to details of activity shown is dependent on role and department
- Document exports automatically include the history of movements to highlight who has been consulted and who supports recommendations
- Detailed audit logs are captured to meet record keeping needs
- Latest version of briefing document always accessible as well as previous versions

Effectively manage briefings

- Simplify the management of requests with personal views and prioritised lists
- Access to all records in one place to effectively manage workload and priorities
- Dashboard view with graphs showing upcoming records to manage deadlines
- Powerful and flexible search engine to find briefings faster

Intuitive reporting throughout your workflow

- Quickly understand personal and business unit level statuses with home screen dashboards
- Report and audit activity with personal views, prioritised lists and export options
- Report on workload, backlogs, SLA performance and bottlenecks
- Filter on metadata types to give quick and easy access to everyday reporting questions
- Connect Power BI to generate your own scheduled reports (or export metadata to Excel for even more flexibility)

Brief Connect

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Key features

Flexible workflows that work for your organisation

- Setup workflows to meet your business needs through configuration
- Respond flexibly to face-paced requests
- Easily liaise and collaborate with stakeholders across departments
- Assign proxies to authorise and action briefings on behalf of executives
- Update record metadata to adapt to changing requirements

Secure and compliant

- Access to the app is controlled by Azure AD / Entra; benefit from all of the security features in Entra, including MFA, conditional access policies and risky login protection
- Comply with Victorian Government data protection and records rules using Microsoft Purview Information Protection
- Actively used by Departments to store PROTECTED / OFFICIAL content.
- Clear separation between departmental and ministerial staff

User friendly and accessible

- Available from any device, any time
- Accessibility - WCAG 2.0 standard
- Access from Teams or the browser
- Mobile and tablet friendly for working on the go
- Easily engage with stakeholders across the department
- Individual options to configure notifications in Teams and / or email

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Supports all your departmental and ministerial correspondence types, including:

- Ministerial and Secretarial briefs
- Ministerial and Departmental correspondence responses
- Cabinet and committee submissions
- Parliamentary documents, including Questions on Notice, Question Time Briefs, Ministerial with Minutes, Possible Parliamentarian Questions (PPQs), Estimates
- Annual reports
- Freedom of Information requests
- Executive recruitment
- .. and any other record type you need

Workflows and record types can be tailored to match your organisational language and workflow

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Secure, performant and accessible by design

Brief Connect has been designed to be secure, performant and accessible by design

➤ Brief Connect is deployed into your Microsoft 365 and Azure tenants. Microsoft Entra (aka Azure Active Directory) provides enterprise-grade security.

➤ Securely accessed from laptop, desktop or mobile using Outlook, Teams or a browser. WCAG AA compliant.

➤ All data stays inside your security domain. Only your authorised staff have access to your production data.

➤ Sensitive information is secured by Microsoft Purview, allowing you to track, limit and revoke access, prevent downloads, block sharing and stop printing if desired.

➤ Documents can be stored in your M365 tenant, or in SharePoint Embedded – giving you the option to isolate sensitive documents from your operating materials.

➤ Built-in features segment the activities of the public service from political staff, whilst retaining a clear audit trail to meet your record keeping requirements.

Impact: At the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet they have seen the following results:

• Number of steps in the briefing process cut from 51 to 20
• Printing costs down 96%, largely thanks to Brief Connect

Read the case study

Outlook

Microsoft Teams

Browser

Copilot for M365

Entra ID authentication with SSO and MFA

Azure components
(Deployed to your Tenant)

Microsoft 365
(Hosted in your Tenant)

Modern, Responsive Web Frontend

SharePoint Data Storage

Purview Information Protection and Information Security

Azure Open AI Intelligence

Function App Workflows

Application Insights and Monitoring
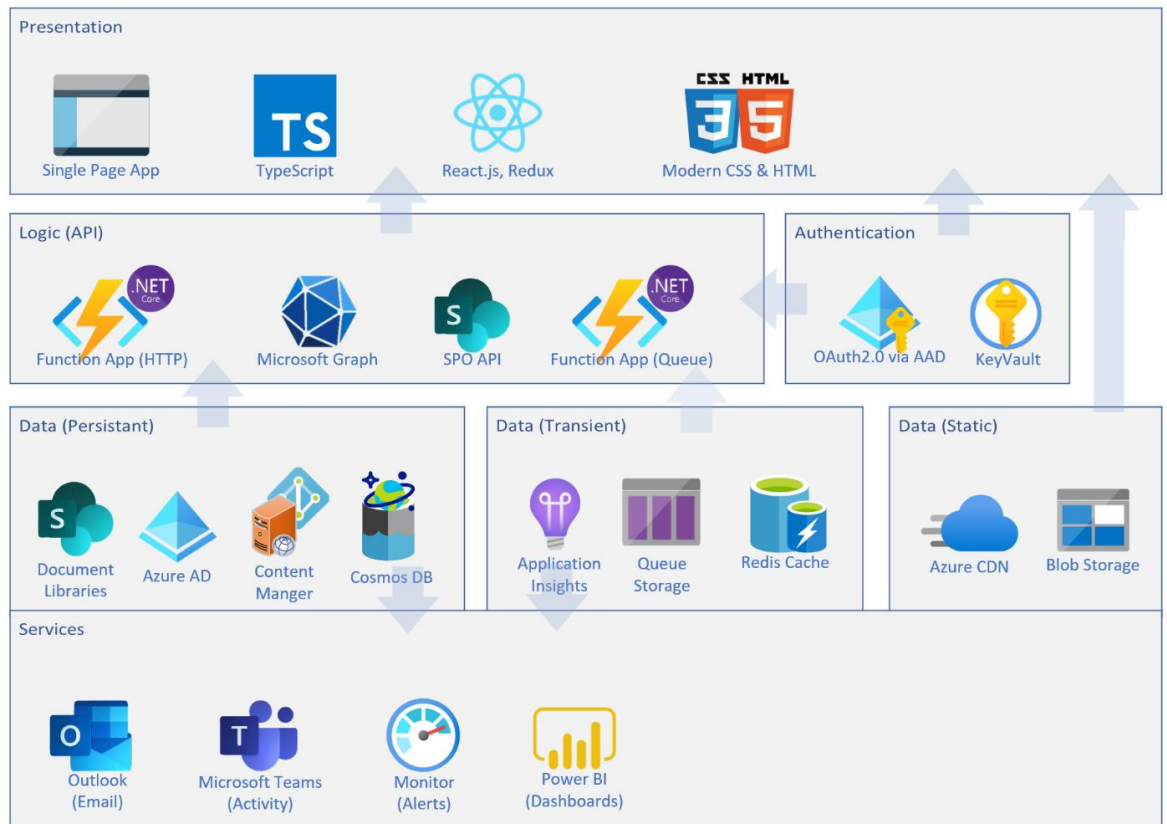
Power BI Reporting

Brief Connect

Architecture overview

Brief Connect consists of a single page application (SPA) front-end with a scalable API back-end that leverages Office 365 services where possible.

1. Application data is stored in SharePoint – there is no SQL database, although some 'auxiliary' data is stored in Cosmos DB table storage such as audit logs and user settings.

2. Specifically, a record is represented by a folder, in which related documents are stored. Permissions are applied utilising permissions hierarchy to reduce update frequency.

3. SharePoint search is utilised for querying data – removing the requirement on Azure SQL and the re-implementation of the security model.

4. The API layer can scale with flexibility and granularity as Azure Function Apps (rather than as a classic web app set-up).

5. All data relating to a given record is stored as one unit (a record folder) simplifying retention and disposition of data (except for audit log data that is stored in Cosmos DB, however the solution facilitates the exaction of the audit log for a given record via a single click).

6. A queue and queue-trigger function app support asynchronous processing (workflow engine such as Power Automate or Logic Apps is not required).

Presentation
- Single Page App
- TypeScript
- React.js, Redux
- Modern CSS & HTML

Logic (API)
- Function App (HTTP)
- Microsoft Graph
- SPO API
- Function App (Queue)

Authentication
- OAuth2.0 via AAD
- KeyVault

Data (Persistant)
- Document Libraries
- Azure AD
- Content Manger
- Cosmos DB

Data (Transient)
- Application Insights
- Queue Storage
- Redis Cache

Data (Static)
- Azure CDN
- Blob Storage

Services
- Outlook (Email)
- Microsoft Teams (Activity)
- Monitor (Alerts)
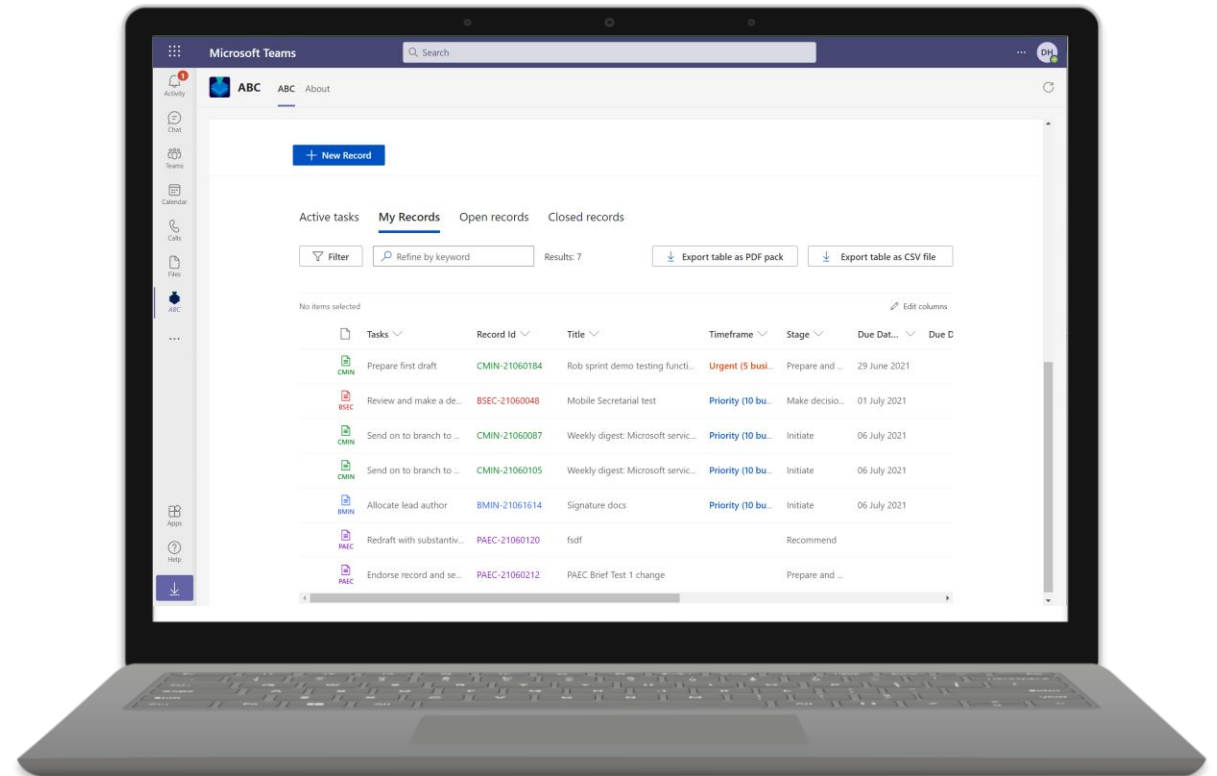- Power BI (Dashboards)

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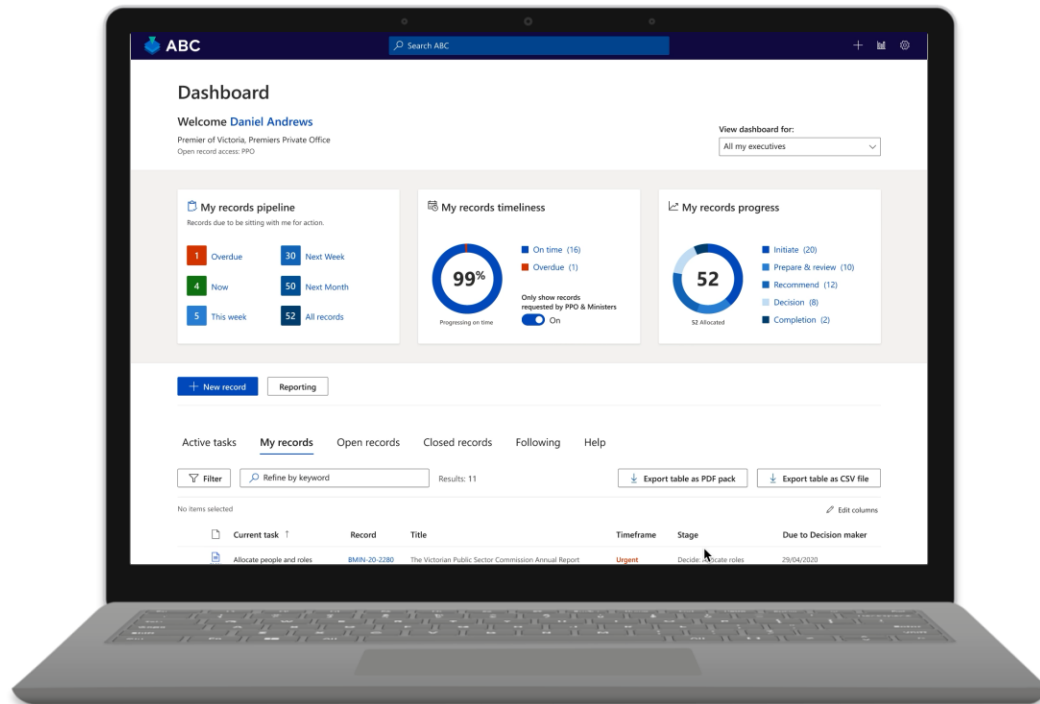
Microsoft Teams integration

Teams and notifications

- Brief Connect is completely integrated as a Microsoft Teams app and is accessible by all users from the action bar on the left side of the users Teams platform.

- Users can seamlessly access the tool within the already heavily used Teams platform, naturally increasing the adoption of the tool, especially since many record change notifications come through the Teams activity feed.

- For the first time, all users can keep track and manage their day-to-day communications and tasks from Teams.

- The full range of functionality is available in the tool, from Teams, creating a unified user experience.

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How Engage Squared can help

The future success of efforts by government to digitise their briefing and correspondence systems will depend on the support of an experienced team, well-versed in working cohesively with governmental departments.

How we can help

- Optimal architecture planning for performance
- Understanding limitations and capabilities of the platform
- Engage senior members of government and embed change
- Efficient and successful project delivery
- Ability to navigate stakeholders and complex environments
- Experience and knowledge from previous projects

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Project approach

Project approach

Our project team will work with you and your stakeholders to run this project following agile principles and deliver it through two key phases.

These will cover **Discovery**, **Build** and **Deployment** and **Change and Adoption**.

During this engagement, we will run the **Discovery** phase, where we'll analyse your current state, gather requirements for your future state, and provide technical and business recommendations as to the best approach to deliver this project to your end users, through a formal proposal.

If engaged to deliver against those requirements, our team will then begin phase 2. Here, we will build out your requirements, continually prioritising according to your business needs, testing and deploying.

In parallel, we'll tailor our support for your end users and technical teams to ensure that a smooth transition to BAU and successful adoption of the tool.

Phase 1

1. 'Discovery'

The **discovery** phase helps us to understand how your employees are managing briefings today, from here we can develop your vision for the future state of briefing and correspondence management. This phase will equip you with an implementation roadmap, which will enable you to make an informed decision as to the upcoming implementation.

Phase 2

2. 'Build and Deployment'

Throughout the **build and development** phase we'll work in partnership with you and your stakeholders to develop your solution, test it, and deploy to production.
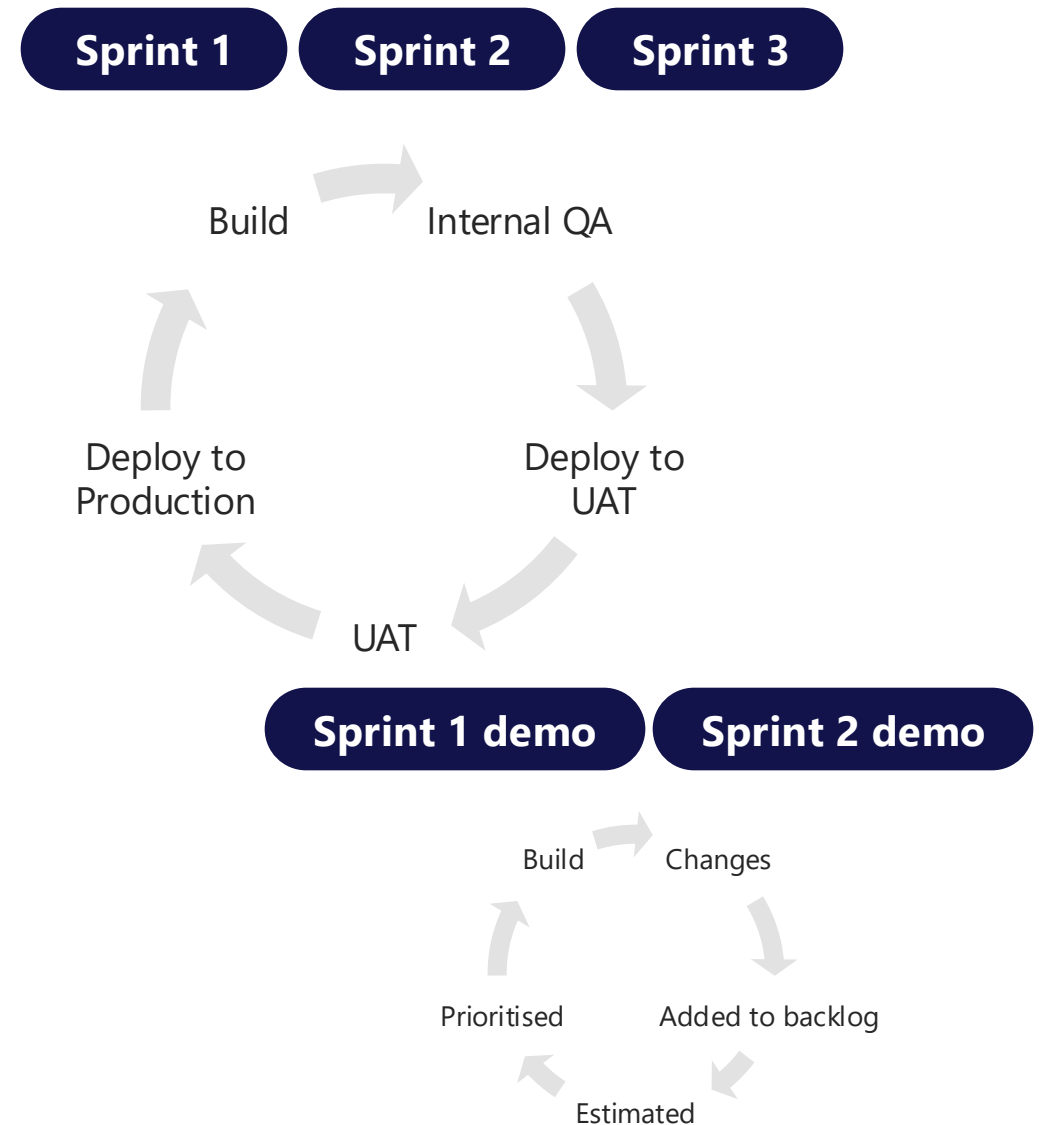
3. 'Change and Adoption'

We will support the launch of the application as much or as little as you need us to though our **change and adoption** phase. We'll also be there to support the transition to your technical teams, to enable them to continue driving efficiencies by maintaining the application.

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Phase 2: Build

Building tools

Dependent on your business requirements and the complexity of your management process', the Build phase can run from 3 – 9 months. We'll work in partnership with your teams, utilising agile principles, to build the solution in sprints, prioritising your requirements accordingly.

After each sprint, the solution will be tested, demoed to the business for feedback and changes, and deployed from DEV to UAT. Here, users will be able to test the solution before deployment to Production, ensuring the highest quality application is launched.

Sprint 1   **Sprint 2**   **Sprint 3**

Build → Internal QA

Deploy to Production → Deploy to UAT

UAT

Sprint 1 demo   **Sprint 2 demo**

Build → Changes

Prioritised → Added to backlog
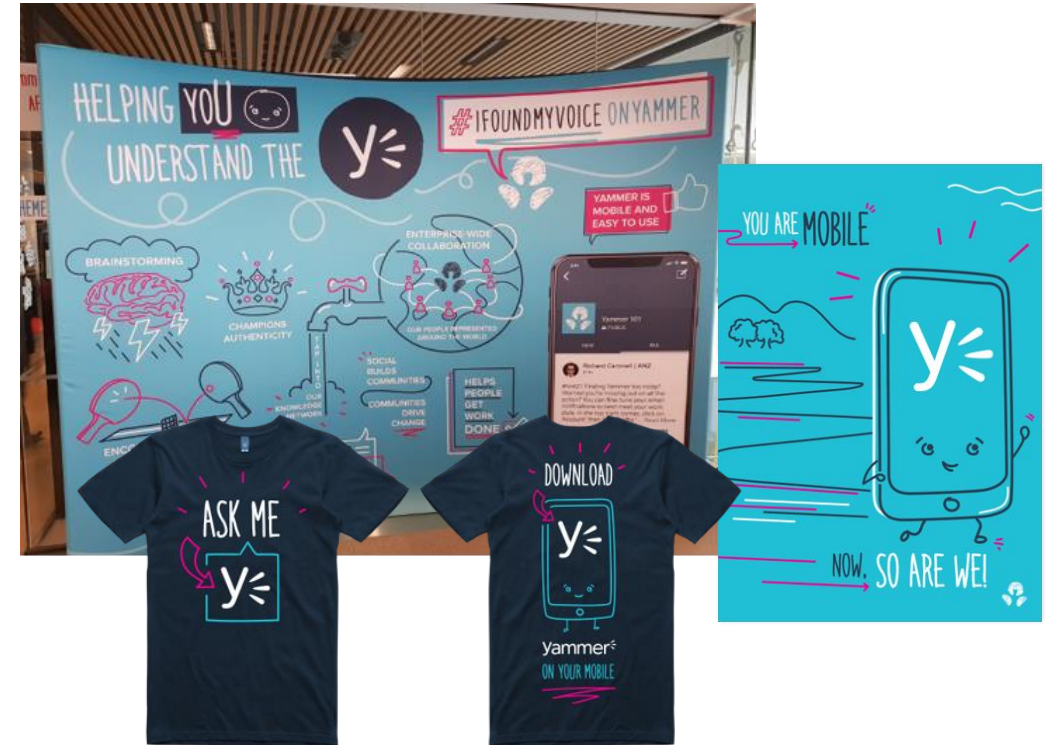
Estimated

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Phase 3: Change and adoption

End users

We will support the launch of the application as much, or as little as you need us to. We can't expect everyone to immediately understand and embrace the tool so we will focus on making people feel comfortable with the technology and provide them with information as they are ready to consume it. On launch day, we can also be available to deliver a launch campaign, to really engage with your end users and create excitement around the new way of working.

Technical enablement

We'll also be there to support with the transition to your technical teams to enable them to continue driving efficiencies by maintaining the application. We also offer ongoing support management should you need our expertise on an ongoing basis.

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About us

2,000,000+
people use an intranet built by us

150+
Digital Workplace transformations

70
Our intranets are used in 70 countries

6,000,000
Records migrated

Melbourne Sydney

Brisbane Perth
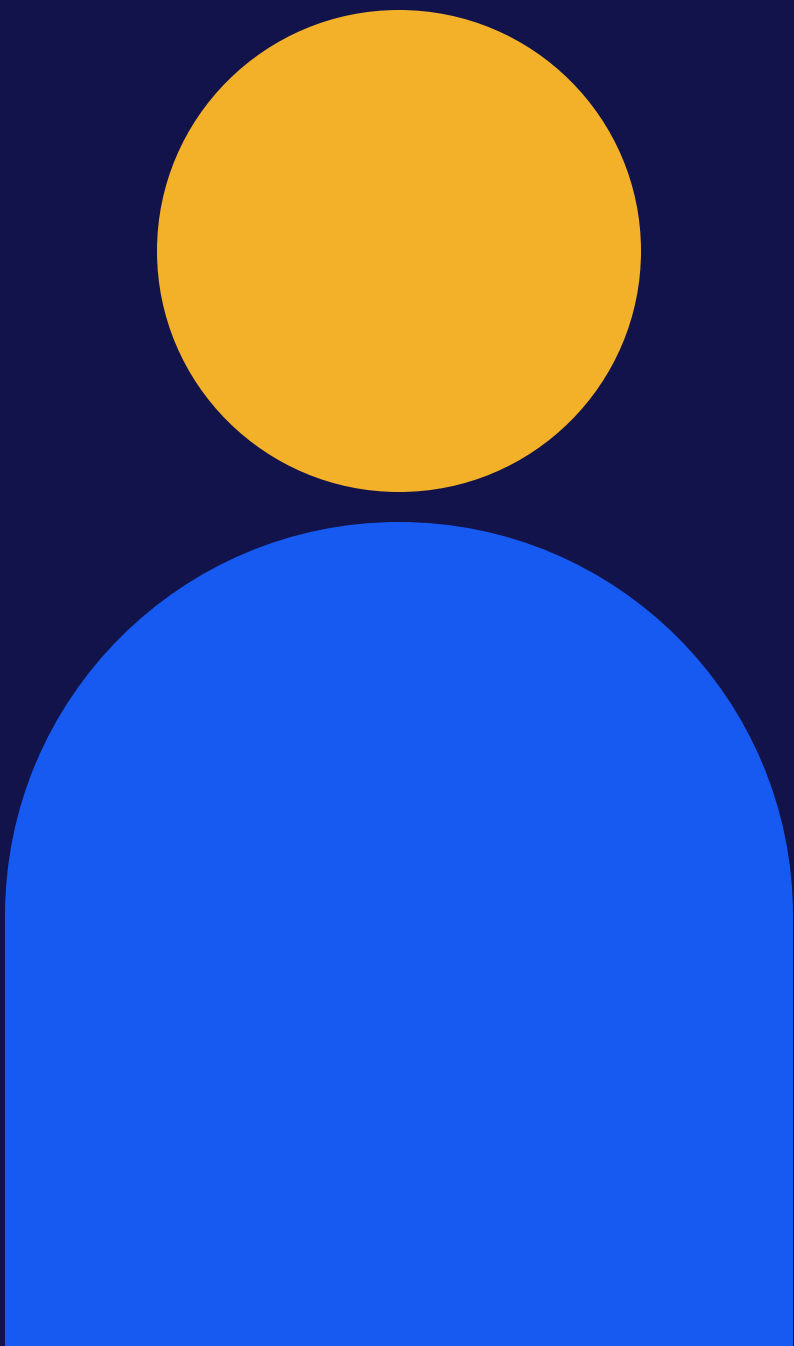
Canberra Auckland

Wellington Japan

Brief Connect

Get in touch

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