

CASE STUDY

City of Maribyrnong extends MFA protection to all users & resources while securing service accounts



BASED

Footscray, Victoria,
Australia



INDUSTRY

Government



USERS

650+



ENVIRONMENT

On-prem Active Directory
SQL servers, Legacy applications
Privileged admin accounts



The role of the municipality of Maribyrnong, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, is to provide leadership and governance for citizens of their area. As the closest level of government to the community, the municipality is responsible for responding to local challenges and needs, considering its diverse needs in decision-making, and ensuring resources are well-managed and governed with responsibility and with accountability. The municipality of Maribyrnong is the most densely populated municipality in Metropolitan Melbourne and has a population of over 80,000 residents.

THE CHALLENGE:

Implement access restrictions on all users

- Limited visibility into admin user access requests
- Minimize privilege access to long-standing admin users
- No visibility and protection of service accounts

THE SOLUTION:

Real-time visibility into all access-related activity

- Implemented MFA protection for all users and resources in just four weeks
- Complete visibility into activity of all admins
- Full visibility and protection of all service accounts

The challenge: Getting full visibility into authentication activity of admin users

As a prominent governmental entity, the city council of Maribyrnong needed to increase its overall security posture, which meant gaining better visibility into its admin users as well as its overall IT infrastructure.

"In Australia, we have a compliance framework called the Essential Eight which has been a real driver for tightening up our security controls and processes around authenticating users by deploying multi-factor authentication across our environment," says Mark Bretherton, Maribyrnong City Council's Network Infrastructure Coordinator.

To strengthen their security posture, the Maribyrnong City Council first needed to gain better visibility into a legacy admin account.

"If the account had become compromised, it would've had access to everything, so we wanted to limit the privileges of the account. This meant we needed an approach that could provide visibility into the user activity and the different authentication trails into the account," explained Bretherton.

"We had an old administrator account with privileged access that we had limited visibility into. This out-of-the-box Microsoft administrator account had become highly privileged over the years, and we couldn't simply retire it."

— Mark Bretherton,
Maribyrnong City Council's Network
Infrastructure Coordinator

Seeking service account security

In addition to limiting the access privileges of specific admin users, the city council needed to gain visibility into the activity of their service accounts. “I had set up numerous service accounts a long time ago to run particular jobs but then moved on to other infrastructure projects. While this set-and-forget approach worked at the time, in the long run I had minimal visibility into the activity of each service account,” said Bretherton.

Because the service accounts had been set up years previously, they had highly privileged access, which meant a potential security risk if the service accounts were compromised. “Before security was the concern it is today, you made sure service accounts had privileges to ensure their tasks would work,” Bretherton noted.

The multitude of challenges that the city council was facing – including improving service account security and getting visibility into admin accounts – meant that finding the right solution was challenging. But because Mark Bretherton knew about Silverfort through a previous colleague who was working there, he was eager to learn more about the solution.

“I was talking to my colleague about this administrator account issue and he mentioned how Silverfort can actually help you track down all account activity,” said Bretherton. “And he was exactly right about this, so we moved forward with Silverfort.”

“Now that security has become a top priority for us, we could see the issues with these service accounts and needed to resolve them”

– Mark Bretherton,
Maribyrnong City Council's Network Infrastructure Coordinator

The solution: Real-time visibility into all user access activity

After signing on with Silverfort, the Maribyrnong City Council quickly deployed the solution and started to see results right away.

“We set up five access policies in just a few weeks, which enabled us to quickly track down this legacy admin account to see what that account was accessing,” said Bretherton. “Although we weren’t able to retire the account, we now have complete visibility into that account’s behavior and all of its access request activity,”

Shortly afterwards, the city council began to get additional value from Silverfort around other use cases. “Silverfort has been a very good educational tool for us,” said Bretherton.

Silverfort is also helping the Maribyrnong City Council protect its core resources, a capability that wasn’t possible before. “We started to use Silverfort for other projects, such as applying security controls to our SQL servers. For our main line of business applications, we couldn’t apply standard security controls. Now we use Silverfort to secure the Active Directory connections into our SQL server,” said Bretherton.

“It’s given us a lot of visibility into the users and the authentication requests across our environment, which we didn’t realize we needed.”

– Mark Bretherton,
Maribyrnong City Council's Network Infrastructure Coordinator

Complete service account protection

Once they had insight into how Silverfort could address additional use cases, the Maribyrnong City Council implemented Silverfort's service account detection and protection capabilities.

"We have close to 460 service accounts and needed much better visibility and protection into them," said Bretherton. "So far, we've been very pleased with the work Silverfort has done to help improve the visibility of these accounts."

The result is that Silverfort has been able to provide a much more granular level of insight into service accounts for the council.

"The longer we use Silverfort, the more accurate the fine details of each service account are. We now get daily alerts detecting new details in every service account and their activity."

— Mark Bretherton,
Maribyrnong City Council's Network Infrastructure Coordinator

"Additionally, Silverfort shows us a lot of different metrics with our service accounts that weren't available before, such as user accounts with non-expiring passwords and older accounts that have irregular group memberships," said Bretherton.

"Overall, we are thrilled with Silverfort's service account capabilities as we now have complete visibility into each service account so that I can see how I configured them and know they're protected by Silverfort," said Bretherton.

About Silverfort

Silverfort secures every dimension of identity. We deliver end-to-end identity security that is easy to deploy and won't disrupt business operations, resulting in better security outcomes with less work. Discover every identity, analyze exposures, and enforce protection inline to stop lateral movement, ransomware, and other identity threats.

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