northern beaches council

Overview of Case Study

How Northern Beaches Council used Airlock Digital application control and allowlisting to improve its cybersecurity posture and achieve Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) Essential Eight Maturity Level Two for application control.

About Northern Beaches Council

Northern Beaches Council is a local government body formed from the amalgamation of Manly, Pittwater and Warringah Councils.

Challenge
Improve Northern Beaches Council's cybersecurity posture by using application allowlisting to complement its endpoint detection and response strategy and achieve Essential Eight Maturity Level Two for application control.

Approach
After seeking advice from its trusted cybersecurity partner, Northern Beaches Council selected Airlock Digital application control and allowlisting to meet its needs.

Result
Deploying Airlock Digital application control and allowlisting has enabled Northern Beaches Council to implement advanced allowlisting across its entire organisation, including its DevOps team.

> Airlock Digital solution checks are completed over a coffee each morning.
>
> **Michael Turner**
> Chief Technology Officer,
> Northern Beaches Council

AIRLOCK DIGITAL

The Airlock Digital Application Control and Allowlisting Solution

With the Airlock Digital application control and allowlisting solution, Northern Beaches Council has:

- moved seamlessly from Essential Eight Maturity Level Zero for application control to Maturity Level Two

- achieved award-winning leadership in the local government sector for the deployment of application allowlisting and a strong cybersecurity posture

- blocked large numbers of unwanted applications, nuisanceware and malicious files that users attempt to initiate via public PCs in libraries

About Airlock Digital

Airlock Digital is the global leader in application control and allowlisting, trusted by organisations worldwide to protect against ransomware, malware and other cyber threats.

The Customer

Northern Beaches Council in Sydney provides services to a community of over 266,000 people.

The council aims to be a leader in cyber risk management and is using best of breed technologies to realise its ambition. Responsibility for executing this vision lies with Chief Technology Officer Michael Turner.

The Challenge

Northern Beaches Council wanted to upgrade its cybersecurity to protect users and the community, comply with government mandates, and be recognised as a leader in the field within local government.

The council identified gaps in its architecture and assessed its posture in relation to Essential Eight mitigation strategies. When measured against the Essential Eight application control strategy, the council was at Maturity Level Zero and its project called for achievement of Maturity Level Two.

The council elected to pursue a best of breed cybersecurity product strategy and Turner's team asked existing vendor CrowdStrike and its trusted cybersecurity partner to recommend an application allowlisting product. Both nominated the Airlock Digital application control and allowlisting solution.

The Approach

"When we looked at the relevant factors, it was clear that deploying Airlock Digital would be our best course of action," said Turner.

After purchasing the Airlock Digital solution in March 2022, the council ran the product in audit mode for four to six weeks to identify all the applications and processes running in its environment. It then adopted a rolling, month-long process to move its endpoints into enforcement mode.

Airlock Digital now runs on 2,000 endpoints, including all workstations and a hybrid on-premises and Microsoft Azure cloud server environment. "All hardware and software we distribute has Airlock Digital deployed as standard and we check through that process whether the product is configured properly and showing up on the console correctly," said Turner.

Throughout its change management program, the council informed all users that Airlock Digital was running as a control for compliance and to help improve its security posture.

Any user that sees a pop-up advising that Airlock Digital blocking an application can raise a support ticket with the council's service desk. The desk typically receives one or two tickets per week from users who want to run legitimate software not on the council's allowlist.

The Result

With Airlock Digital application control and allowlisting, Northern Beaches Council is achieving its principal cyber security compliance objective. "Airlock Digital has enabled us to achieve Essential Eight Level Two Maturity for application control in line with government guidance to councils," explained Turner.

"We are making strides towards being a local government leader in cyber security and councils in NSW and Victoria are reaching out to learn from us," he added. "The Airlock Digital solution does exactly what it says it does, which is critical for such a foundational cyber security technology."

The product includes a purpose-built one time pad (OTP) feature that enables administrators to issue time-limited exemptions that enable users to access unapproved applications in urgent circumstances. This ensures support tickets are quickly and efficiently resolved, reducing any friction users may experience with the allowlisting deployment.

With Airlock Digital installed and running the daily management effort is minimal, with Turner noting "Airlock Digital solution checks are completed over a coffee each morning."

The product also enables Northern Beaches Council to extend allowlisting enforcement coverage to its DevOps team, that develops and deploys to a range of locations at speed, with only minimal disruption.

According to Turner, Airlock Digital "just works" and has stopped several unwanted applications, scripts and installers from executing in the Northern Beaches Council environment. "We do have users who try to install applications or potentially invasive tools on public computers in our libraries," he explained. "Airlock Digital in combination with other tools enables us to detect these attempts and gives us protection in this space."

Learn more about Northern Beaches Council by visiting **northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au**