



SUCCESS STORY DEEP DIVE

iCatalyst helps Western Australian government department modernise emergency response with mobile-first CRM app

A Western Australian government department responsible for community services engaged iCatalyst to support its emergency response function during periods of high demand. The emergency response team supports civilians during bushfires, floods, and other major natural disasters and operates in fast-moving, high-pressure environments.

What began as temporary and intermittent surge support evolved into a longer-term engagement after iCatalyst helped the department address a

large backlog of data following a major emergency. Through this work, both teams recognised the need for a more sustainable approach.

iCatalyst worked with the department to scope, design, and deliver a mobile-first solution integrated with the department's existing Dynamics 365 customer relationship management (CRM) environment. The solution went live in late 2025, with iCatalyst continuing to provide ongoing support and enhancement guidance.

WHEN EXISTING SYSTEMS NO LONGER MATCHED REALITY

Emergency response work takes place in environments that are unpredictable, emotionally charged, and often chaotic. Civilians arrive at response centres displaced, distressed, and urgently seeking help. Responders must listen, reassure, coordinate assistance, and capture accurate information while conditions continue to change around them.

Most emergency response operations are coordinated from hubs set up in locations such as town halls or town centres. From these hubs, responders also conduct outbound outreach, walking the floor or travelling into affected areas to locate and assist civilians. This requires responders to stay mobile and present, rather than seated behind a desk.

Many responders are staff or volunteers whose day jobs sit outside emergency management and who are called in only when emergencies occur. When they arrive, they are expected to start working immediately, often with little or no training on the systems in use. This made simplicity and ease of use critical requirements.

Before this project, responders relied heavily on laptops and desktop systems to access and update information. In practice, this forced a trade-off; responders either stayed on the floor to support civilians or stepped away to update systems. Real-time data capture was inconsistent as a result.

The department used a Dynamics 365 CRM system; however, untrained users struggled with its steep learning curve, especially when working in high-pressure and time-sensitive environments. Many responders avoided using the system during emergencies and instead phoned information back to staff at a central base for manual entry into the CRM.



“What we saw was responders having to choose between helping people in front of them or stepping away to update systems”

In noisy response centres, this approach led to miscommunication, delays, and lost details, as information was frequently out of date or not entered at all during emergencies. After each event, the department faced a significant backlog of data that still needed to be manually entered or corrected, placing ongoing strain on staff during recovery periods.

iCatalyst initially provided surge system support during emergency seasons to help the department manage demand. This approach eased immediate pressures; however, it left the underlying issue unresolved.

Following a major emergency, the department approached iCatalyst with a large backlog of data that had not been entered into the CRM system, highlighting just how unsustainable the existing approach had become.

Jeremy Desanker, General Manager – Platform Solutions, iCatalyst, said, “What we saw was responders having to choose between helping people in front of them or stepping away to update systems. From our perspective, it was clear there had to be a more effective way to support them in that moment.”



BUILDING A SOLUTION AROUND HOW EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTUALLY WORKS

iCatalyst supported the clean-up and ingestion of the backlogged data, helping the department regain control of its records. This work unlocked a moment of clarity; instead of continuing reactive support after each emergency, both teams began to explore how emergency response could be supported more effectively at the point where information was first captured.

iCatalyst recommended a series of workshops and a scoping exercise to understand how the emergency response worked on the ground. The team designed the solution around how responders operated in the field and the constraints they faced during emergencies.

Multiple workshops were held with end users from the emergency response management team. These sessions explored how responders interacted with civilians in hubs, how outbound outreach was conducted, how information needed to be accessed and updated in the field, and why the existing system became a barrier under pressure.

Jeremy Desanker said, “We didn’t start with an end solution in mind. It was about talking it through and figuring out what would actually work.”

Based on these sessions, iCatalyst proposed a mobile-first solution that integrated with the department’s existing Dynamics 365 CRM environment. The solution was built using the Microsoft Power Platform, specifically a Canvas Power App designed for mobile devices and iPads.

During development, iCatalyst addressed several technical challenges, including storing and managing large volumes of data on mobile devices and handling synchronisation when responders worked offline and reconnected at different times. This included managing update conflicts where multiple users returned online after working offline.

Offline capability was another critical requirement as emergency response work often takes place in areas with limited or no connectivity, including remote regions and disaster-affected locations.

Jeremy Desanker said, “The whole app can be taken offline, which was a massive pain point with the old system. Now, though, responders don’t have to stop working or wait for a connection to capture critical information.”

WHAT CHANGED ONCE THE SOLUTION WAS IN PLACE

Emergency response workflows changed significantly once the app was in place. Responders captured information directly into the system on a mobile device when civilians arrived at response centres, removing the need for phone calls or later data entry.

Responders could walk the floor with an iPad, search for individuals within seconds, and view recent activity, previous emergencies, and family information in one place. This immediate visibility made it easier to identify repeat cases, including individuals or families affected by multiple emergencies, such as those living in flood-prone or high-risk areas.

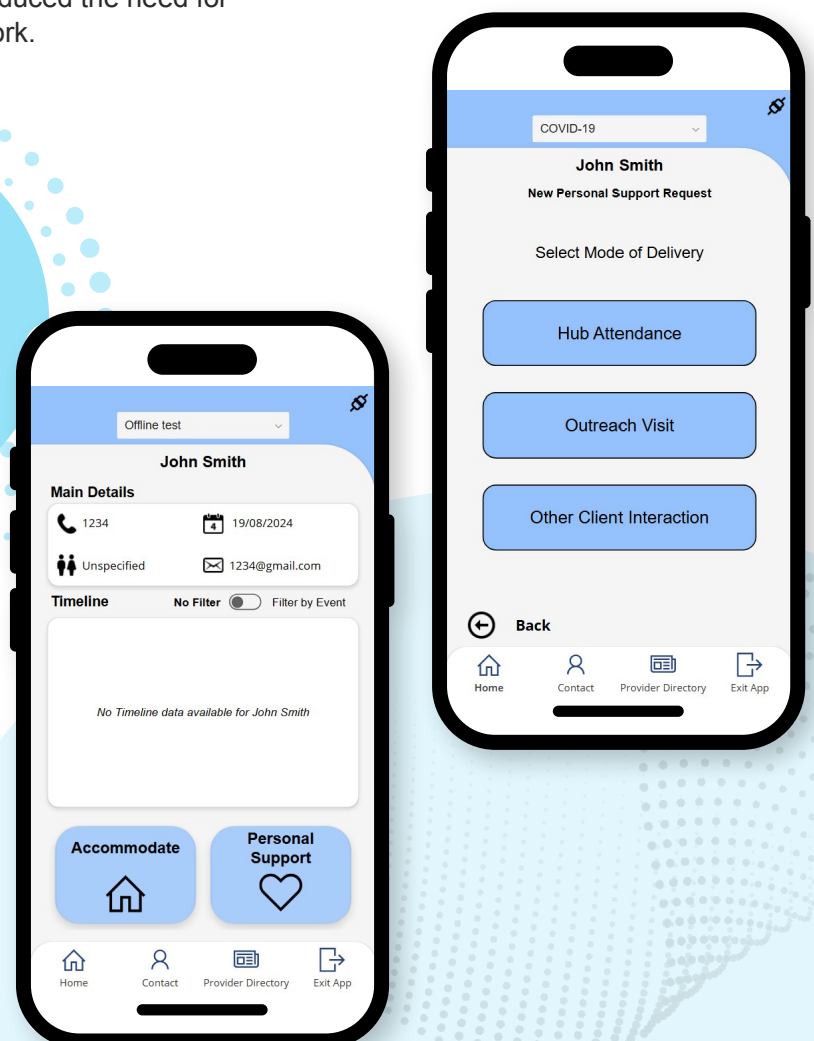
The app helped responders create and update support cases on the spot, upload documents such as identification that may have been lost or destroyed during an emergency, and record notes in real time. This replaced the previous “phone to base” approach and reduced the need for post-event catch-up work.

The solution also supported outbound outreach. Responders could move away from hubs and into affected areas while still accessing and updating records directly in the system. Civilians could receive SMS messages directly from the app with their case number and relevant updates, giving them clearer information and reducing uncertainty during stressful situations.

Jeremy Desanker said, “Responders now capture information at the point of interaction, which reduces delays from outdated information and eases administrative backlogs. That change lets teams focus on supporting civilians instead of managing systems or remembering details to enter later.”

The solution went live in late 2025 and has received positive feedback from users since.

“
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LOOKING AHEAD

Following the app go-live, iCatalyst has continued to support the department and assist with future enhancements, while the department retained ownership of the app to continue building on the solution beyond the initial deployment. The work has progressed beyond the original rollout, with both teams focused on making practical improvements that support emergency response teams working on the ground.

Jeremy Desanker said, “This was a good example of where our experience really mattered. We understood the technology, but more importantly, we understood the environment they were working in and how quickly things break down if systems don’t fit that reality.”

That experience shaped how iCatalyst approached the engagement. Drawing on long-standing work with Microsoft Business Applications, including Dynamics 365 and the Power Platform, the team applied practical knowledge from enterprise resource planning (ERP) and CRM projects delivered across Australia and internationally. That focus helped the department build a solution designed around real emergency conditions and how responders work in high-pressure environments.

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FEATURED CUSTOMER – WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

The department delivers community services across Western Australia and includes an emergency response function that supports civilians during bushfires, floods, and other major natural disasters. Emergency response teams deploy into high-pressure environments to coordinate assistance, manage information, and support displaced and distressed individuals during crisis events.

Contact our team today.