



School of Computing  
& Information Systems

# **Implementing technology and organisational based change at Tasmania Police – A case study.**

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Leonie Ellis  
November 2009

## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a case study into change management strategies utilised by Tasmania Police in the implementation of technology related projects during a ten year period (1998 to 2008). The role and impact of technology in and on approaches to organisational change management has become the focus of increasing debate amongst both academics and practitioners (Markus, 2004). While numerous theories, models and approaches exist that have been developed from organisational experiences, few of them are based on organisational case studies specifically examining the relationships over time between approaches to organisational change management and technology implementations. This research contributes to these debates through analysis of a case study at Tasmania Police. As a hierarchical command-control type organisation with a tradition of top down management this case study also considers the role organisational structure and culture has on approaches to organisational change management and technology implementations.

The case study at Tasmania Police was based on the analysis of four projects that were developed directly as a result of a major business process re-engineering exercise (BATON) initiated in 1997. BATON developed and promoted an over-arching change management strategy and the use of information and communications technology as the major driver for its implementation of organisational change within Tasmania Police. The four projects were selected to specifically investigate the relationships between the implementation of technologies to drive change and the change management strategies utilised. To explore the sustainability of these relationships and overcome the potential limitations of case studies conducted over a single period of time, a two phase approach requiring a second period of research at Tasmania Police was adopted.

The research methodology was underpinned by a subjective ontology and an interpretative epistemology. The strategy adopted a two phase approach requiring data collection and analysis at two time points during the ten year period. The research design uses four technology related projects as a vehicle to study the change management process. During phase one, drawing on tools from ethnography, the researcher became a participant-observer. Data was collected through observations,

informal interviews, activity monitoring and participation in work with the project teams and change management coordinators over a two year period.

Drawing on principles of grounded theory, data analysis of the four projects was conducted iteratively using thematic coding. This analysis led to the generation of six themes identifying eleven factors illustrating the relationships between organisational change management and technology implementations. In particular the analysis highlighted that Tasmania Police relied on informal communication practices and trust networks (as distinct from their hierarchical organisational and governance structures) to achieve change. The analysis also highlighted the capacity for technology to be significant as both an agent and object change that required adaption and flexibility in change management strategies. Interpretation of phase one data suggested that Tasmania Police was an organisation that appeared to fit with conventional models of change management in the literature.

Phase two involved a second period of data collection and analysis aimed specifically at exploring the sustainability of relationships between organisational change management and technology implementations identified in phase one. Phase two data collection coincided with a Tasmania Police three year business planning exercise that incorporated a review of their change management and technology approaches. The research design utilised the outputs from phase one to generate a interview question frame that was used to investigate the current status of organisational change management and technology implementation. The interviews were conducted with members of the business project unit, senior management and change agents. Interview analysis revealed differences in the relationships and approaches adopted by Tasmania Police over time. Phase two analysis also highlighted how new factors had emerged that directly impacted on the organisational approach to technology initiated change.

Interpretation of phase two highlighted how the initial perspectives on Tasmania Police were re-configured and transformed over time. Based on the evidence presented in this case study, the role of technology in and on approaches to organisational change management does require a higher level of sophistication of both project management and change management than had previously been considered necessary within the literature. This thesis contributes to an enhanced understanding of the implementation

phase of technology-based change. This Tasmania Police case study suggests that for hierarchical organisations informal communication networks are critical and flexibly combining elements of change management and project management is required to accommodate technology as both object and potential agent of organisational transformation.

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