

Software Currency Policy

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PUBLIC

Purpose

To ensure agencies maintain an up-to-date software portfolio and consequently reduce the cost and risk inherent in managing unsupported software products. The term 'unsupported' refers to the situation where vendors (or communities in the case of some open source software) no longer provide patches, updates or other technical support services for the product in question.

In these situations, the Queensland Government currently bears the full burden of risk associated with running unsupported software.

These risks include:

- increased cost to maintain a software asset without assistance from the vendor
- lack of agility resulting from its inability to align with changes in business requirements
- limited capacity to integrate with up-to-date technologies
- scarcity of skilled labour to maintain unsupported technologies
- human error and resulting costs from supporting the complexity of many versions.

Scope

This policy applies to all Queensland Government departments.

This policy relates to any software domain within the technology layer of the Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture (QGEA).

It applies to:

- off-the-shelf software with periodical release cycles.

The following are outside the scope of the current policy:

- custom-built applications (but the underlying technology software platforms are in scope)
- security patch updates

- any product whose version has been mandated across government through another QGEA artefact
- software licensing issues are dealt with under QGEA Information Standard 45.

Policy statement

To ensure that the delivery of government services underpinned by information technology is reliable, low risk, cost effective and agile, the Queensland Government will reduce and where possible eliminate instances of unsupported software.

Policy benefits

The benefits of this policy cover the areas of reducing risk, cost and improving agility:

- maintain and possibly improve capacity to integrate with up-to-date technologies and to align with changing business requirements
- ensure better vendor support for deployed software, particularly during incidents
- maintain alignment with skills available in the labour market
- create financial savings associated with software procurement, support and training through opportunities to consolidate software portfolios
- reduce risk and complexity through supporting fewer versions with different behaviours
- ease consolidation of agency infrastructure to whole-of-Government services provided by CITEC.

Policy requirements

Policy requirement 1: Agencies must retire or replace software before it reaches the end of mainstream¹ support unless the CEO has formally accepted the risk of not doing so.

Agencies must retire or replace any off-the-shelf software with a high or medium² business impact before it reaches the end of mainstream support by the vendor.

If mainstream support cannot be determined, the software must be maintained no more than two major³ versions behind the latest release (N-2), or within three years of the general availability of a new release, whichever occurs sooner.

When calculating the percentage of software in an agency that complies with this policy, the following is to be used:

- fleet items are to be considered as a single asset. Individual instances are not to be counted
- for all other software, individual instances should be counted.

¹ Mainstream support refers to the period of time during which a vendor product is available for general release and receives warranty support, security and non-security updates.

² Business Impact is defined and calculated using the Queensland Government ICT Planning Methodology; High refers to a score above 3.2 and Medium refers to a score ranging between 1.6 and 3.2.

³ Major version. Vendors use a variety of systems to version their products. As such it is difficult to define exactly what a major release is. For the purposes of this policy, a major release should have the following characteristics:

- is not merely a revision or a bug fix release but which contains substantial changes and new features; and
- generally occurs annually, or less frequently.

Implementation

Agencies should conduct a high-level risk assessment of their compliance with the requirements of this QGEA policy. This must be completed by 30 June 2010.

A business impact analysis is required to determine the risk level of a software asset. Business Impact is defined and calculated using the Queensland Government ICT Planning Methodology.

Implementation of all requirements must be completed in accordance with the *Software Currency QGEA position paper*.

Issue and review

This QGEA policy is published within the QGEA and is administered by the Queensland Government Chief Information Office. It was developed by the Queensland Government Chief Technology Office and approved by the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer on 14 January 2010.

This QGEA policy will be reviewed on a two yearly basis. The next review date is January 2012.

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