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New GITA contact details

GITA has re-located from Melbourne to Sydney. Below are our new contact details. Please adjust your records.

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A picture tells a thousand words

Interview with Neil Smith, Manager Spatial Solutions, Department of Transport, Government of Victoria

For Neil Smith, Manager Spatial Solutions, with the Victorian Government Department of Transport, an electronic picture tells a thousand words. His role involves empowering managers through the use of graphical representation and database tools that allow for the better management of key public infrastructure including roads, ports, rail, bus and tram lines throughout Victoria.

Like many spatial professionals, Neil's early career involved survey drafting when he worked for the State Electricity Commission in Victoria (SECV). "In the old days our work was largely in the field,

surveying electricity lines and drawing up maps and diagrams manually. Of course CAD/GIS technologies have now totally transformed our profession. My first view of a GIS system was the GFIS package which ran on an IBM mainframe. The introduction of this system allowed the SECV to better manage assets like power lines, poles, switching infrastructure and transformers. Previously all this asset information was maintained in disparate databases. The GFIS system brought together most of these databases to create a network model. It created an electronic picture of the



Neil Smith,
Manager Spatial Solutions
Department of Transport Victoria



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electricity network and allowed us to attribute details to different assets so we could monitor and maintain the system more efficiently.”

Following privatization of the Victorian SEC, Neil’s role evolved to include electricity IT projects management at Eastern Energy and following its acquisition, at TXU Energy.

“My career then took on an interesting development. I was approached to work for an IT start-up, a GIS company called Smallworld. My early role involved project management and eventually, I ended up progressing to be the General Manager. After I joined Smallworld, it listed on the Nasdaq and it was acquired by GE. Subsequently, I became Managing Director for the AP region. With the GE Integration, my role then changed again to involve CEO responsibility for the energy portfolio in the AUS/NZ region. It was a great time in my career with new responsibilities, lots of change and travel.”

“In my current role as Manager Spatial Solutions with the Department of Transport in Victoria, we are bringing GIS and spatial technology solutions into our day to day operations across all levels in the Department. The technologies we work with are now every-day and the public is incredibly spatially intelligent with the widespread use of GPS navigation systems, Google Street View and Microsoft Virtual Earth.”

“As part of the Strategy & Architecture Team, I am responsible for the ICT business strategy and all information management systems for the Department of Transport. We have multiple business units, databases and systems which we are consolidating, sharing and maintaining. The strategy is to shift the mindset from a vertically orientated business to a horizontally aware business so we can establish one authoritative source of data for key infrastructure like railway lines, rail stations, tram lines, tram stops, bus routes, bus stops, public transport timetables, taxi systems, roads, marine and freight logistics. We are talking about the whole transport model for Victoria which is substantial, ever changing and complex.”

“What’s exciting about our use of spatial technology is that if you take for example public transport, you can now work out the performance of a bus, tram or train and apply this to contracts. With project management of infrastructure upgrades, we have an electronic picture and database behind it to better plan and manage field operations. Empowered business unit managers with intuitive electronic mapping to aid in decision making, is what makes GIS so interesting and powerful. A picture really does tell a thousand words.”

We work with a variety of spatial packages from ESRI, Smallworld, MapInfo, Intergraph, Oracle Spatial and other supporting packages for image management and

High Resolution Imagery





“Our challenges going forward are not unique”

“When I think about where the surveying and drafting profession began to where we are today, I am just astounded”

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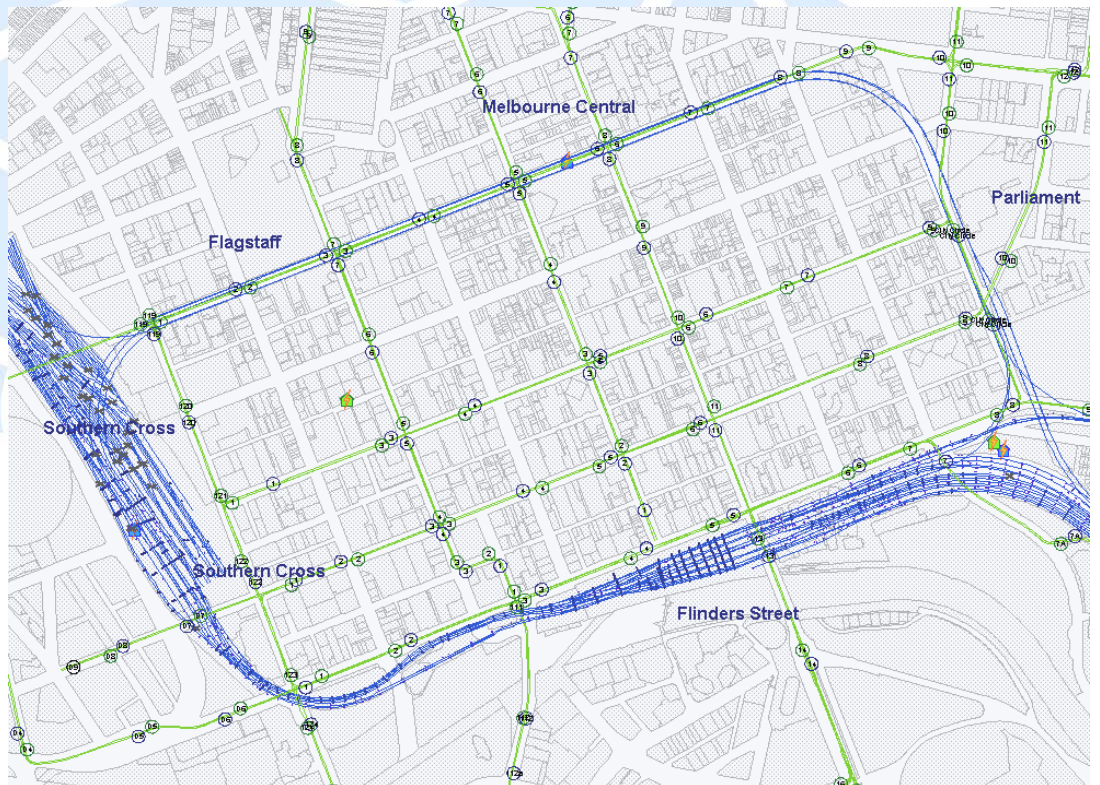
translations including ER Mapper and FME. We have multiple data sets and we are always improving the way we share data so that the Department has one authoritative data set. My current focus is on the whole of Department information management strategy and further developments for spatially enabling each business unit within the Department.”

“Our challenges going forward are not unique. The first principle is always to establish who the authoritative source of data is. Different users have different levels of accuracy depending on the purpose. Integrating data is a constant objective but this is more a quality and integrity issue than due to any limitations placed on us by the technologies we use. Of course we need to stay up to date with the constant

changes and ensure the cost of maintaining our systems is the best possible return on investment. I suspect that we will also need to address privacy issues going forward. We have already seen these issues emerge in public debate over the use of aerial photography and Street View. I would not like to see laws put in place that limit what we can do with the technology.”

“When I think about where the surveying and drafting profession began to where we are today, I am just astounded at how quickly we have moved and how widespread the use of spatial technology is. For a large Government agency like the Department of Transport it’s great to see such a widespread use of GIS systems by all levels of management for making decisions and better managing vital public infrastructure.”

Rail and Tram Network (Melbourne)



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(Australia & New Zealand Division)

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