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Digital Trust In Australia: Reduce Security Risks And Deliver Superior Citizen Experiences With Digital Document Processes

Australian government agencies must respond to major economic and social trends like concerns about the future of work, climate change, and data privacy. In this environment, expanding government digital services while preserving citizen trust is not an easy task. Digital trust requires agencies to adopt not only Zero Trust frameworks for cyber resiliency, but also foundational technologies and practices that support privacy and security. Our research found that solutions that easily digitize familiar and document-oriented workflow processes of government contribute to successful human-centered digital transformation. Such solutions do this by delivering superior experiences, increasing efficiencies through automation while promoting collaboration, and improving process and identity assurance to reduce security and legal risks.

Adobe commissioned Forrester Consulting to research what challenges Australian government agencies face, what they can do to accelerate successful digital transformations, and the importance of digital document processes. To explore this topic, Forrester conducted an online survey with 150 senior business and technology decision-makers responsible for digital document processing at government agencies in Australia, Singapore, and India.
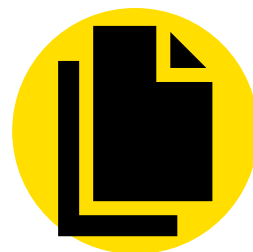
KEY FINDINGS

Forrester's study yielded the following key findings:

- **Australian government agencies underutilize digital document process solutions, which impedes citizen and employee experiences.** Agencies are ill-equipped to address digital-document-enabled delivery. Sixty-eight percent of respondents said a lack of technology and tools is impacting employee productivity, and 58% said their agency has difficulty maintaining security and confidentiality and ensuring that only the right people can access specific documents.

- **Digtizing document processes is an essential building block to secured digital government services.** Sixty-two percent of respondents said ensuring data security and compliance is an essential benfit of digitizing document workflows. Sixty-six percent of respondents said reducing fraud risks with better audit trails is a significant benefit.

- **Using a phased deployment delivers immediate benefits.** Digital document process solutions can be deployed in isolation or with application-based integrations ahead of full process digitization. In the meantime, agencies can plan how to optimize these solutions and deploy them more widely as they modernize their legacy technologies and digitize cloud-enabled processes at scale.

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The disruptions brought by the pandemic forced Australian government agencies to accelerate their digital initiatives, including how they create, distribute, sign, and store documents. While they rely more heavily on paper-based processes than other verticals, government agencies have undergone a mindset shift in the last 18 months when it comes to document digitization.
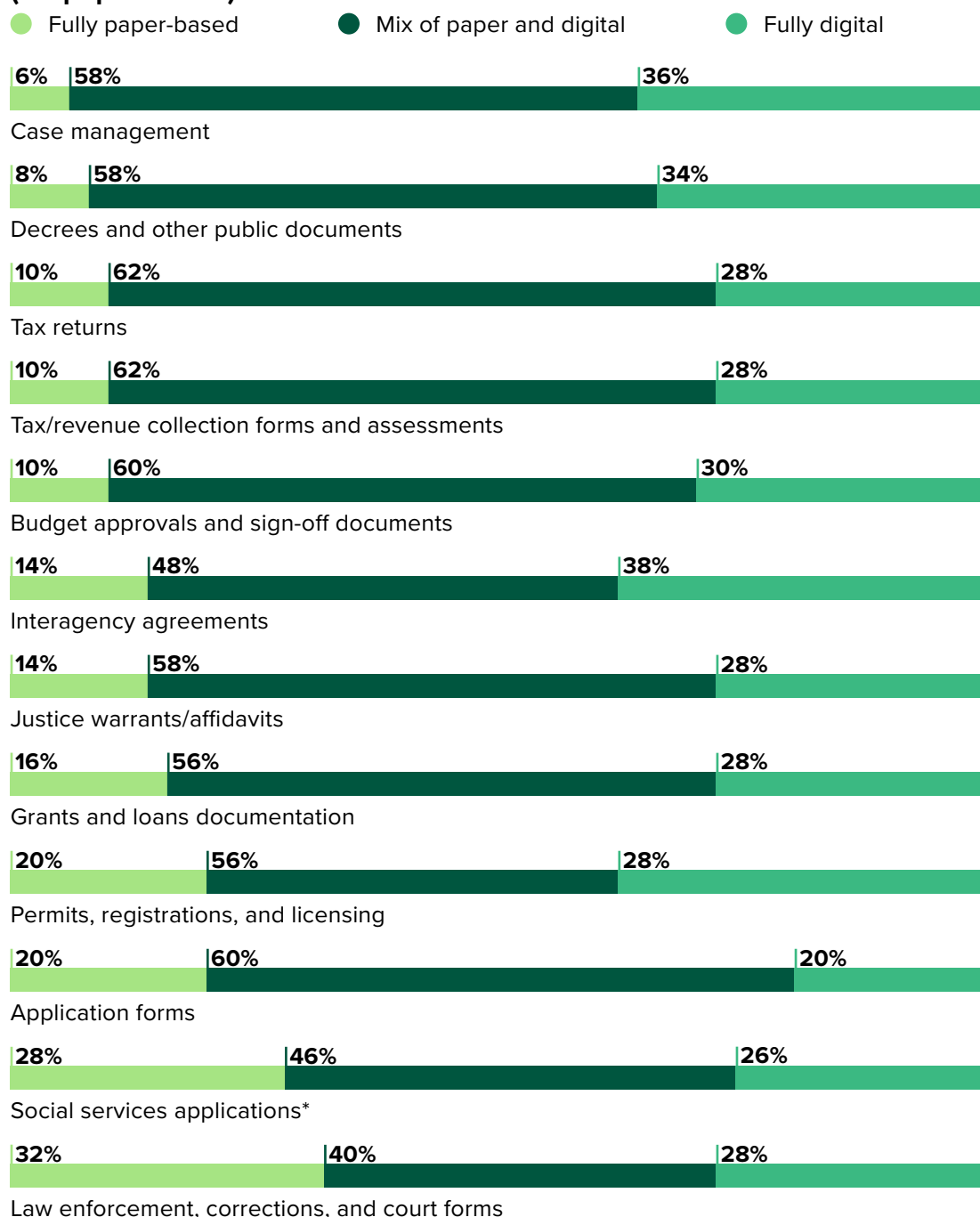
- **Australian government agencies currently use a mix of paper and digital document processes**. Only 14% of respondents said their agency has fully digitized its document processes as most continue to use a mix of paper-based and digital document workflows. For instance, respondents said 32% of law enforcement, corrections, and court forms are not yet digitized (see Figure 1). Twenty percent of respondents said legal departments rely the most on paper-based document processes, and 26% said procurement departments do.

- **The rise of digital government services brought a mindset shift within agencies.** The pandemic's disruptions pushed Australian government agencies to further digitize their document processes. As a result, barriers to adopting digital document process technologies (e.g., e-signatures) are fading away. Fifty-six percent of respondents said they were concerned about the complexity of integrating e-signatures with day-to-day productivity applications prior to the pandemic, but this is down to 18% today.

One-third of law enforcement, corrections, and court forms are not yet digitized.

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Figure 1

"To the best of your knowledge, please indicate the level at which each of the following processes are managed using digital tools and e-signatures (vs. paper-based)."

● Fully paper-based   ● Mix of paper and digital   ● Fully digital

| 6% | 58% | 36% |

Case management

| 8% | 58% | 34% |

Decrees and other public documents

| 10% | 62% | 28% |

Tax returns

| 10% | 62% | 28% |

Tax/revenue collection forms and assessments

| 10% | 60% | 30% |

Budget approvals and sign-off documents

| 14% | 48% | 38% |

Interagency agreements

| 14% | 58% | 28% |

Justice warrants/affidavits

| 16% | 56% | 28% |

Grants and loans documentation

| 20% | 56% | 28% |

Permits, registrations, and licensing

| 20% | 60% | 20% |

Application forms

| 28% | 46% | 26% |

Social services applications*

| 32% | 40% | 28% |

Law enforcement, corrections, and court forms

Base: 50 senior business and technology decision-makers responsible for digital document processing at their organization/
government agency in Australia
Note: *Includes applications for healthcare, housing, unemployment, etc.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, September 2021

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- **E-signature adoption is on the rise, but it is still underutilized.**
  The use of e-signatures in Australian government agencies has
  doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. Respondents said
  20% of internal documents and 14% of citizen-facing documents
  requiring signatures were signed with e-signatures prior to the
  pandemic, but these numbers are now up to 40% and 36%,
  respectively. However, the opportunity to further leverage the
  benefits offered by using e-signatures remains high as the majority
  of documents are still signed with wet signatures (52%) or by
  copying and pasting an image of a signature (21%).

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Australian Agencies Are Accelerating Government Transformation With Digital Document Processes

Australian government agencies are increasing their investments in digital document processes and e-signature solutions. Putting this foundational building block in place for further online government services will allow them to modernize their services with a high degree of assurance and governance. More specifically, our research found that Australian government agencies are:

- **Accelerating their digital transformations by prioritizing data, speed, and security.** Respondents said the top priorities for Australian government agencies during the next 12 months are to improve the use of data for decision-making (70%), to accelerate the response to market change (64%) and the shift to digital government for IT modernization (62%), and to improve risk management including data security and privacy (62%) (see Figure 2). General-purpose technologies such as digital document process solutions are foundational elements required for each of these priorities.

- **Increasing their investments in digital document processes and e-signatures by 25% and 21%, respectively, during the next 12 months.** These increased investments will accelerate the shift to e-services and help agencies catch up with digital-leader agencies in other countries. For instance, agencies in Singapore are increasing their investments in digital document processes and e-signatures, but at a slower pace.[1]

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- **Leveraging document sharing and data security features of digital document processes to achieve their objectives.** Most respondents said document-sharing features (80%) and data security and compliance features (78%) offered by digital document processes are "very important" or "critical" to support their agency's operations and objectives (see Figure 3).

Figure 2

"Which of the following initiatives are likely to be your agency's top priorities over the next 12 months?"

Improve our use of data insights in decision-making	**70%**
Accelerate our response to market changes	**64%**
Accelerate our shift to digital government for IT modernization	**62%**
Improve risk management including data security and privacy	**62%**
Provide stronger economic growththrough market shaping	**60%**
Enabling sustainable hybrid work and customer/citizen services	**56%**
Embrace sustainable best practices	**56%**
Improve our ability to innovate	**56%**
Provide better regulations and market oversight	**54%**
Improve the experience of our citizens	**52%**
Improve the experience of our employees	**42%**
Reduce costs	**32%**

Base: 50 senior business and technology decision-makers responsible for digital document processing at their organization/ government agency in Australia
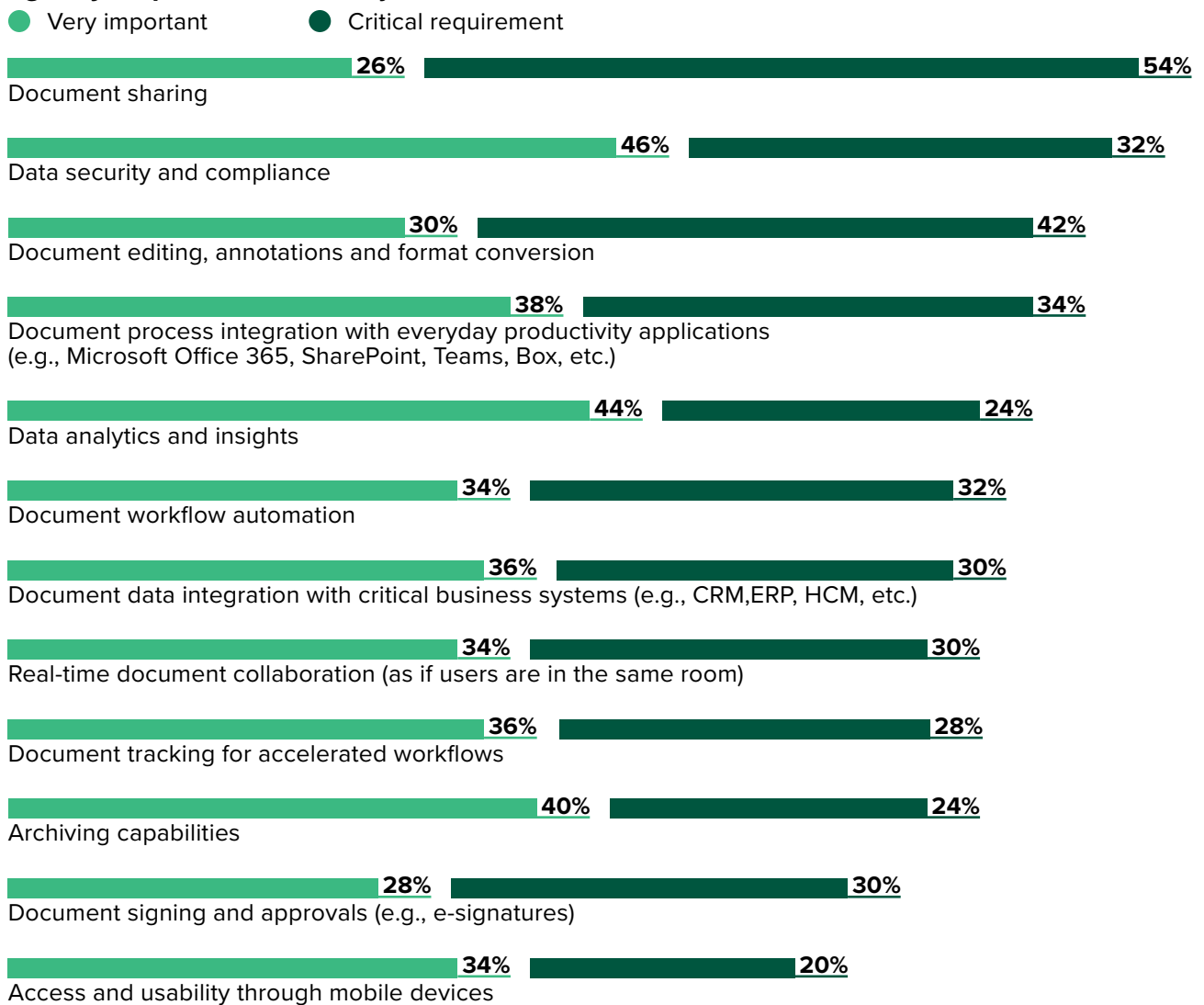Note: Showing "Critical priority" responses.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, September 2021

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- **Improving collaboration and data security by digitizing document processes.** Sixty-two percent of respondents said digitizing document workflows helped enable a hybrid working environment at their agency, and 68% said it improved collaboration. Sixty-two percent also said it helped ensure data security and compliance and 66% said it reduces fraud risks with better audit trails (see Figure 4).

Figure 3

"In your opinion, which of the following features provided by digital document processes and tools are the most important in supporting your organization's/ agency's operations and objectives?"

● Very important   ● Critical requirement

	Very important	Critical requirement
Document sharing	26%	54%
Data security and compliance	46%	32%
Document editing, annotations and format conversion	30%	42%
Document process integration with everyday productivity applications (e.g., Microsoft Office 365, SharePoint, Teams, Box, etc.)	38%	34%
Data analytics and insights	44%	24%
Document workflow automation	34%	32%
Document data integration with critical business systems (e.g., CRM,ERP, HCM, etc.)	36%	30%
Real-time document collaboration (as if users are in the same room)	34%	30%
Document tracking for accelerated workflows	36%	28%
Archiving capabilities	40%	24%
Document signing and approvals (e.g., e-signatures)	28%	30%
Access and usability through mobile devices	34%	20%

Base: 50 senior business and technology decision-makers responsible for digital document processing at their organization/ government agency in Australia
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Figure 4

"What benefits has your organization received from digital document workflows and processes solutions?"

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

68% Improving collaboration in a hybrid working environment

62% Enabling a virtual working environment

62% Improving employee productivity and time savings

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

54% Maintaining and/or increasing revenue

42% Allowing us to continue to service customers

OPERATIONS

70% Accelerating document processing

66% Reducing fraud risk with better audit trail

62% Ensuring data security and compliance

58% Improving data, information, and document tracking and traceability for auditing purposes

50% Leveraging data analytics and insights

Base: 50 senior business and technology decision-makers responsible for digital document processing at their organization/ government agency in Australia
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, September 2021.

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- **Putting a modern approach to citizen digital identity in place.** Sixty-two percent of respondents said the rise of digital government services demands modern citizen identity strategies. For that, their agencies are partnering with e-signature providers certified by local authorities. Fifty-two percent of respondents said it's a very important selection criteria for their agency (versus only 18% from government agencies in Singapore).

Digitizing document processes helps Australian government agencies adopt modern approaches to citizen digital identity.

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Forrester's in-depth survey of 50 senior public-sector business and technology decision-makers responsible for digital document processing at their Australian government agency yielded several important recommendations:

Now is the time to digitize.

Your agency must look at digital document process solutions as general-purpose technologies on the way to a bigger transformation agenda. Doing so will help it achieve some key objectives, such as improving data-driven policy making, enabling self-sovereign identities (SSI), and strengthening security and compliance. Beware that if your agency starts with digitizing point of interactions, it will need to evolve to journeys over time.

Go for a phased deployment.

Your agency can deploy digital document process solutions in isolation and ahead of a full-process digitization, which allows it to adopt a phased deployment. Deploy rapidly (and initially in isolation) or with application-based integrations to ensure your agency can deliver strong citizen and employee experiences while maintaining business continuity. In the meantime, plan how your agency will further integrate these solutions, optimize them, and deploy them more widely as it modernizes legacy technology and as cloud-enabled processes are digitized at scale.

Adopt cloud-based technology to help support governance, compliance, and data security.

Cloud-based technologies, digital document processes, and e-signature capabilities are foundational technologies your agency should leverage to keep up with — and maybe even to lead — digital transformation efforts taking place at your agency. The first step is to assess the capabilities of providers accepted by local authorities and certified by regulators to short-list the digital document process and e-signature solutions most suited to your agency's needs.

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Leverage digital document processes to increase trust.

The number of digital identities that Australians have created on the myGovID app to access government services is growing rapidly.[2] To continue creating trust among parties and to support compliance across a number of regulatory requirements (e.g., Australia's Privacy Act), prioritize partnering with technology providers that offer identity authentication and signature (non-repudiation) services.

Future-proof your agency to deal with documents that are more interactive, compartmentalized, and infused with structured data.

Some categories of documents like agreements or contracts have legal implications, and they must be preserved in a trustworthy manner. But professionals can struggle to keep pace with new sources of digital records in a fast-changing environment. Digitizing document processes and workflows is a requirement for your agency to successfully retain, protect, and preserve digital information over the long run.

METHODOLOGY

Adobe commissioned this study to explore how digital document processes technologies such as e-signatures are supporting APAC government agencies and businesses by providing them with the level of security and certification required by local legislations, and by enabling the Future of Work

To achieve these objectives, Forrester conducted an online survey with 150 senior business and technology decision makers based in Australia, Singapore and India with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organisation/government agency.

Project Director: Line Larrivaud, Market Impact Consultant

Contributing Research: Forrester's CIO Professionals research group

[1] Source: "Singaporean Government Agencies: Maintain Your Digital Momentum And Improve Data Compliance With Digital Document Processes," a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, January 2022.

[2] Source: Campbell Kwan, "Australian company directors must now register for digital ID through myGovID," ZDNet, October 31, 2021 (https://www.zdnet.com/article/australian-company-directors-must-now-register-for-digital-id-through-mygov/).

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