

CASE STUDY

Lock Focus/ Ambulance Victoria



BACKGROUND

Lock Focus has been at the forefront of lock mechanism innovation in Australia since 1972. Its locking products are used in a wide range of industries and applications. Lock Focus is continually developing new and innovative locking solutions for customers that have special requirements that a standard product will not satisfy.

One such application was recently requested by Ambulance Victoria.

In the critical space of health care, every second – and every resource – is vital. When an ambulance leaves the emergency department to pick up a patient, staff must take a set of linen: a sheet for the trolley, pillowcase, blanket and hand towel, all of which need to be constantly restocked.

If an ambulance driver goes to the linen cupboard and there are no towels, blankets or sheets, they can't go to their next job, and the consequences could be catastrophic.

Poor resource management, as well as theft from the cupboards, was leaving some emergency departments critically low on linens – meaning trucks had to divert to redeliver to departments in need. This was inefficient and there was no accountability for the resources.

Ambulance Victoria's linen supplier, Princes Linen, contacted Lock Focus to create a solution that would allow them to secure their linens and track how many they had and where they had them, and predict when they would need more of them at urgent times.

THE PROJECT

Lock Focus engaged Stronghold to help create and install a system which would allow Ambulance Victoria and Princes Linen to keep their sheets, blankets, pillowcases and towels in secured lockers and give real-time data on resource levels.

Each piece of linen was 'chipped' with an RFID tag which kept track of how much linen was in the lockers. This data was combined with information on who accessed the lockers and when, and uploaded to a secure server. When levels dropped below the minimum inventory requirement, the linen delivery drivers get a text message to instruct them to make a delivery.

"We knew it was going to be a big project, so we had to get it right," said Mark Hermans, Business Development Manager at Lock Focus.

"It was pretty much a bespoke project that was driven around a tender.

"With our system, the doors are spring loaded so they close after each use. There are two springs that Stronghold has installed to close and latch the door, so that the information



of what's in there can be recalculated. And if something has been taken out, it's allocated to the last user that opened it."

Both the physical design of the lockers and the technology within have had to be flexible to adjust to the client's evolving needs.

"We had to design it to their original configuration, but it had to have some flexibility within that to add extra features that were required," said Mark.

"We've already had several upgrades to the software since it's been installed because they've come back to us with ideas to make the end-user experience better."

THE RESULT

29 sets of lockers have been installed in emergency departments across Victoria.

Data from the lockers is helping Ambulance Victoria and Princes Linen work stock emergency departments with the right amount of linens for their workload, and helping drivers schedule their deliveries more efficiently.

"I know they've already started to adjust volumes because what they had before wasn't very accurate," said Mark.

"I'm sure it's getting some great efficiencies and they're seeing supply at a much better rate. We're tweaking the minimum and maximum inventory levels to make sure these emergency departments are getting the supply exactly where they need it to be at the right time."

The lockers were built to withstand the heavy use of a busy emergency department, and early feedback has been positive.

"There's always a lot of transportation of people going into emergency, so it's getting a lot of use at the moment," said Mark.

"The feedback has been good to date."





WHY STRONGHOLD

Stronghold's pricing, design expertise and customisation ability, as well as the fact that the lockers would be made in Stronghold's Campbellfield factory, made it the best option for the job. Stronghold and Lock Focus have worked in partnership for two decades, and there is a great working relationship between the two businesses.

Nick Hollins, General Manager at Stronghold, consulted extensively with Lock Focus to evolve the design in line with the customer's requirements.

"The system that we designed was an improvement of the prototype and Nick has progressed that even further," said Mark.

"Once they'd won the tender, there were a lot of changes required to improve it. So it was bespoke designed. Nick came here early on after he'd won the tender just to go through the changes required, and then we had a trip there."

Stronghold's ability to meet tight timeframes without the need for international shipping also ensured the success of the project.

"There was a lot of pressure around timeframes, and once Ambulance Victoria had nominated they were tender to us by Princes Linen. We had to give them concrete delivery dates and then the pressure was on. The fact that Stronghold is local was paramount to getting it done in the timeframe."



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