

# VISCOUNT HOMES

## Improves Cash Flow and Customer Satisfaction with FullClarity



### Introduction

Viscount Homes is an Australian construction company with a commitment to providing a trouble-free build to their clients. Founded in 1965, they've been handling residential, commercial, and industrial building projects ever since.

### Challenge

For a long time, Viscount Homes didn't have any dedicated accounting and planning systems. "I used to use several different spreadsheets and bits of paper everywhere," recalls Mark Hardman, Building Manager at Viscount Homes. "I had no real place to record all of the information in one location, and so that, of course, brings on many difficulties throughout the business."

And this isn't a problem that's unique to Viscount Homes: "I've been in many other similar construction companies," Hardman says, "and have seen the difficulties that happen without a specific program to run the enterprise."

### Solution

The team at Viscount Homes started looking for a system that could help. "The key criteria for us were that we wanted a scalable cloud-based

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**Mark Hardman**, Building Manager at Viscount Homes

system that had strong accounting capabilities and that was customizable to suit our specific workflows and requirements,” Hardman says. They soon learned there was only one system that covered everything they wanted: NetSuite.

NetSuite provided the functionality they wanted, and they especially liked having everything stored in the cloud. “We liked the cloud,” says Hardman. “We liked that it was a single view of everything. We liked that it was customizable, so we could tweak it if we wanted to. We liked the real-time nature of the information available to us: if something happened, you’d see it straight away.”

While NetSuite solved the company’s accounting problems, Viscount Homes was still looking for certain construction-specific features. So they began looking for a way to extend the NetSuite functionality to give them the recording and monitoring they needed for their construction business. “We wanted our construction functionality tightly integrated into our accounting functionality,” says Hardman. “We were concerned that what we wanted would be problematic because it meant a lot of systems syncing with each other.”

That’s where FullClarity came in. FullClarity is a natively built-for-Netsuite solution that integrates seamlessly with their NetSuite system and provides them construction-specific functionality. It makes tasks like job costing, timeline management, and forecasting cash flow easy and painless. And because it’s all stored in the NetSuite cloud, it provides them with secure real-time information from wherever they access it.

*“Having real-time updated information has been impactful for us: we know exactly where things are; we know if our revenue is on track; we know whether we’re blowing our budget. And since we know these things earlier, we can take action earlier.”*

**Mark Hardman**, Building Manager at Viscount Homes

## Results

The team at Viscount Homes was immediately pleased with its new accounting and construction management solution. Hardman praises the system’s ease of use: “The system is easy and intuitive; it doesn’t take long to understand how to use it and what’s required.

Using the new FullClarity solution has made it easier for the team at Viscount Homes to understand and keep track of vital information; that results in better communication with clients, which in turn results in happier clients. To be able to have regular, accurate communication drives higher customer satisfaction and, ultimately, more clients when they tell their friends.”

## Forecasting Cash Flow

One of the features the team at Viscount Homes find most useful is projecting their cash flow. This is vital because construction projects potentially stretch on for months, and with huge purchases and payments to be

made throughout each project, it's easy for builders to find themselves in tight spots.

"It's important to keep an eye on our cash flow so that we can adjust schedules accordingly," says Hardman. "Sometimes you look at future cash flow and you realize, 'Well if I do that in that week, we're going to have a quarter of a million-dollar hole in our cash, and we won't be able to pay anyone. But doing that work in a different week, it all comes together' FullClarity allows us to see the big picture so we can adjust schedules to align with cash flow."

"In the past, I didn't have a reliable process. I've only been able to do it manually, by the seat of my pants, using many different spreadsheets. With FullClarity, however, forecasting cash flow becomes a simple process within the software, and having that information available makes it easier to make scheduling decisions.

## Tracking Costs

Keeping an eye on costs is vital in making sure that construction projects don't become money-losing ventures. But with a vast multitude of expenses to keep track of and prices frequently fluctuating, this is nearly an impossible task to do without software help.

"That's always been a problem in construction," says Hardman. "A lot of builders do their estimating in Excel or a specialized estimating tool, but then all of the accounts payable invoices come into their accounting system. When they're in different places, you might have major mismatches that don't catch anyone's attention.

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**Mark Hardman**, Building Manager at Viscount Homes

Before NetSuite and FullClarity, the only thing they could do was look at a job after the project was finished. "We could do a postmortem on it and see just where costs blew out," Hardman says, "but it's already past tense by then; that money is gone. And yes, that can help with future projects because we were able to identify problems on the previous project, but each project is different and has its own issues."

FullClarity's functionality for tracking costs is invaluable to a company like Viscount Homes. "Now we're able to see budget versus actual in real-time, even at the point where we're raising the purchase order for the tiling, meaning we can see straight away that there's a problem. Being able to view your costs and monitor them at any time throughout the process—that's a great benefit. Just having it all in one system, on one screen: that alone saves money."

## Change Orders

One issue that nearly all construction companies deal with is change orders. "They happen all the time," says Hardman. "They can happen almost right from the start, the minute the client makes certain selections. We needed

a way to produce a change order and have it available and visible when the client's invoice goes into the system. We wanted to estimate the change orders properly and then track the client's approval process for those change orders to proceed. We also wanted to be able to capture the change order during the billing process to ensure that we'd get paid."

Having FullClarity handle our change orders has created a much more streamlined and efficient process; he says: "Before NetSuite and FullClarity, it was a fully manual process. It would take a long time, and there would be many papers in trays on many desks. Now everything is in one spot, and it's straightforward to control, monitor, and ensure that each of the steps has been carried out."

## Job Costing

The way FullClarity handles job costing has been a welcome improvement, says Hardman, job costing was done in many different ways: "It could be simply a sheet of paper where somebody is manually providing estimates. It could be in a spreadsheet. It could be in a specific estimating package. All of those methods have pretty much always remained separate from the accounting system."

Going from disparate systems with information all over the place to being able to look in one spot, see everything you're trying to see, and know that it's current, has had a huge impact on my job and the organization. We know exactly where things are; we know if our revenue is on track; we know whether we're blowing our budget. And since we know these things earlier, we can take action earlier when needed."

*"If we're getting 20% more time out of our supervisors, that's 20% of their salary that we're saving. That number more than pays for the cost of the system."*

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Another problem with Viscount's old system was that it took a lot of time to do an estimate. "In the past, we've had situations where a full estimating department will estimate a job, and they'll get everything right down to the last nut and bolt. But all of those costings aren't then included in the next process, the next software package, so we don't have the intertwining of the information. That means we're always having to manually compare things, which is a long process that most businesses don't have time for."

Having automated updated pricing information from their suppliers has been very important to the Viscount Homes team. "For example," says Hardman, "instead of thinking the tiling is going to be ten thousand dollars, we know right away that it's going to be twelve thousand because we've had updated pricing and we've updated our database accordingly. This means we're covering the supplier price increase naturally because that information is updated and accurate in the system. You can't do that when you're using Excel. You just don't have the updated information." Getting quotes on particular items is effortless.



## More Information, Less Paperwork

FullClarity has cut down on time spent approving invoices from contractors and suppliers. “In the past, supervisors working on site would need to come into the office one day per week, generally for a full day, and much of that day involved approving invoices. Projects could have hundreds of invoices every week needing review and approval for payment; it was all a manual process. Each supervisor might have a hundred to do. This took up a lot of valuable time for our supervisors. Then, whatever work his team completed had to be passed on to someone else in the office who would re-record the work into the accounting system to generate invoices for payment. “

With FullClarity, this process is much more straightforward: “It’s a simple push of a button. Through the work schedule, tasks are marked complete. This automatically triggers a request to approve the payment of vendor invoices. If there are invoices that fall outside of this workflow, it requires just a simple push of a button to deal with them. And once those invoices come to the accounting department, NetSuite’s native matching functionality makes processing those vendor invoices quick and easy,” says Hardman.

Not only does the automated process take less time, but it also doesn’t require supervisors to be at the office to do it: “Our supervisors no longer have to spend a day at the office each week; that effectively means that they’ve got 20% more of their time available onsite. If we’re getting 20% more time out of our supervisors, that’s 20% of their

salary that we’re saving. That number more than pays for the cost of the system. So that’s certainly a huge benefit of using FullClarity.”

## Progress Reports

Reporting on job progress is another area where FullClarity has made previously slow manual processes quick and easy. Hardman explains, “Traditionally, a supervisor on the road has a pad of paper where they record the progress of each job as tasks are completed. At the end of the week, they bring their full pad of information into the office to review with somebody who will create a report for everyone else to see how things are progressing.” It’s a slow and inefficient system that doesn’t make great use of the supervisor’s or other’s time.

FullClarity changed this process entirely by allowing supervisors to record their progress on site quickly. Once they’ve done so, that information is immediately in the system and available for everyone to see. A significant advantage of this, Hardman explains, is that the data is always current.

## Timeline Management

Keeping track of the building project’s timeline is an essential part of managing the build. Having a timeline built into our system makes the whole process clearer. “We’ve been able to move away from being loosely based on different people’s experiences and expectations to something more predictable; it is something that can be monitored from day one and can be analyzed at any time.”

Most importantly, he says, projects can be flagged early as ‘danger jobs.’ “Because these ‘danger jobs’ can now be flagged, they can be worked on and reprioritized, so they don’t remain ‘danger jobs.” In the past, ‘danger jobs’ have stayed that way through the whole process and have ended up with labor overages and well over budget. They wasted the company’s time and resources constructing them in the first place. But within FullClarity, that’s something that can be very easily monitored, and ‘danger jobs’ are identified and dealt with early.”

Now having timeline management tools in FullClarity, the whole team can easily access information from any location with their data stored in the cloud. Says Hardman, “One of the advantages we have with the FullClarity Gantt chart being in NetSuite is that everyone can see the project plan on their device. None of our data is siloed and unavailable.”

### Confidence and Scalability

One of the most significant advantages of using FullClarity, says Hardman, is the certainty it gives him about their information and the confidence it gives him about their business’s future. “I think FullClarity has given certainty,” he muses. “Before this system, we relied more on guesswork and gut feel. We weren’t able to know that the information we were looking at was correct, for all of the reasons that I’ve mentioned: information being in different places, the time delay to get new information, and so on.”

This means the team at Viscount Homes can make better and faster decisions. “We’re able

to make better decisions because we’ve got more information at hand, and we’re able to make them faster because it’s all real-time.”

It puts Viscount in a position where they feel confident that they could scale their business. “The system lends itself to being able to scale our processes up continually. It will not run out of capacity, so as we get our operating methods right in each planning and building component, the system will support us as we grow. We can now add new personnel to doing these tasks and scale-up. And the IT infrastructure carries that load easily. The whole system feels infinitely scalable.” We could increase a hundredfold, and all of the benefits that I talked about would only get better.

“I don’t think we would ever need to change out of this system,” he concludes. “FullClarity feels like it’s the final construction management system we will ever need to implement.”

# VISCOUNT

### Company Snapshot

**Company:** Viscount Homes

**Location:** Nunawading, Australia

[www.viscounthomes.com](https://www.viscounthomes.com)