



## Wesley Mission

### Transforming service delivery with a broadband virtual private network

Wesley Mission Sydney, part of the Uniting Church of Australia, was established in Sydney in 1812. It is a church with a worldwide ministry, which operates more than 400 programs and centres. Wesley Mission employs approximately 2500 staff and has 3500 volunteers working in more than 150 places throughout New South Wales.

It provides services and operates charitable business ventures in aged care, health, counselling, families and children, youth issues, suicide prevention, employment, people with disabilities, homelessness, tertiary education and vocational training.

The Mission needed a reliable, high-speed communications network to centralise ICT services management while providing a full range of services to all its service points.

#### Partnering the church with the corporate ICT sector

As a dynamic, results-oriented organisation, Wesley Mission is committed to sustainable growth, and has pioneered concepts such as triple bottom line reporting—social, environmental and financial.

It has numerous joint ventures with the corporate sector, and in the ICT area alone is partnered with companies such as Cisco Systems, Plutonic Zoo, Ethan-SI, Alphawest and SWS.

Having 1500 personal computers spread over 200 sites, the Mission has a long history of using ICT and has a significant investment in it. In 1997 the Mission recognised that the Internet was the way of the future and would prove essential in the effective management of its business processes and thus made a strategic decision to embrace ICT in an unreserved way.

The organisation is committed to adopting international quality standards in all areas of its work. More than 150 centres and services have now been accredited under ISO 9000, the international benchmark for quality management systems. Wesley Mission has also begun a program of risk management modelled on Australian Standard AS4360.

Wesley Mission has adopted a strategy of centralising its operations to save costs and provide the flexibility to meet business needs. Recognising that its existing network was inadequate, it decided to implement a virtual private network (VPN) based on broadband technology. This was expected to save on costs, provide greater flexibility, and improve performance and disaster recovery procedures.



The Mission's Job Network business unit adopted the project, accepting the risk because it was central to its needs.

The results of early testing suggested that DSL would be suitable for home but not for mission-critical office applications, but in 2003 the reliability of DSL increased significantly and was adopted as the basis for the VPN. The company RequestDSL supplies the service, which was brokered through Macquarie Corporate Telecommunications. All major sites were connected in 2003 and the rest of the organisation was connected in 2004.

The Macquarie Intellicentre acts as a major hub in the VPN, and currently hosts Wesley Mission's Internet services, including its web and mail servers, firewall and Internet content filtering, and a VPN concentrator for home office VPN connections. It also acts as the disaster recovery site. Sites have direct access

to the Internet, but connect to the full range of internal applications via the Macquarie Intellicentre.

The VPN is a meshed network with a standard DSL connection of 1.5Mb, although some in the Sydney area have 2Mb links and some smaller sites, typically those with three or less personal computers, have a 384Kb link. Each site pays for its own connection and so can choose the option seen to be the most cost effective. This includes the Wesley Mission head office in the Sydney CBD, although its connection is via a 10Mb full duplex fibre Ethernet connection.

The next improvement to consider is providing telephone services using voice over Internet protocol (VoIP), which is technically possible but not yet financially viable because of the number of small sites operated by the organisation. New technologies such as wireless broadband are emerging as possible options and these will be evaluated as they become viable. Wireless networking between adjacent sites is being used to improve service speed and quality as well as reducing cost.

### Benefits and success factors

Wesley Mission has gained improvements in the quality of the service delivered, security and performance. All sites have access to the full range of applications and services, for a monthly cost of between \$70 and \$450 depending on usage and bandwidth.



The speed and ubiquity of the network means that there is more flexibility in the placement of services. Service centres can be opened more quickly while maintaining cost-effective maintenance.



The VPN has provided enterprise wide access to applications such as finance and payroll and enabled ICT services to be centralised. This has allowed the consolidation of staff and services and improvement in management of support staff. It has also led to hardware consolidation and facilitated software rationalisation. All databases now run off SQL servers at one site rather than a mix of SQL and Oracle at many sites.

Backups are now managed centrally. They are made over the network to the central site, providing for improved control and better recovery procedures. In an emergency it is now possible to reconstruct services and run them from a central server.

The speed and ubiquity of the network means that there is more flexibility in the placement of services. Service centres can be opened more quickly while maintaining cost-effective maintenance. The telephone system, for example, is now managed from Grafton through a link to the network.

Wesley Mission attributes its ICT success to several factors:

- It has a supportive organisational culture. Wesley Mission prides itself on being a dynamic, results oriented organisation, committed to quality and thinking outside the square. These qualities have enabled the ICT group to find creative solutions.
- It regards planning as essential. An organisation must have a vision of what is to be achieved and a strategy to reach it and must commit to it.
- Wesley Mission's staff understand the vision in terms of the business needs of the organisation and to have the skills and dedication to keep working when things appear difficult. Wesley Mission expects



those same qualities in its suppliers, and ensured that its business strategists were involved in the process.

- Testing is essential and, in a large-scale implementation such as this, running a pilot was essential to provide a safe test environment which could be used to identify problems and issues without impacting on the entire organisation.

## Barriers

There were unnecessary outages caused by inadequate support arrangements. The problems stemmed from poor communications. There were some initial problems with suppliers, whose service procedures have not always met the requirements of Wesley Mission. For example, 24-hour, seven-days-a-week support was not originally provided and occasionally network changes were made on the mornings of business days.

Wesley Mission has its own highly trained staff, who have had trouble with the extent of the network's outsourcing. They attempted to resolve problems as they occurred and this caused problems with the suppliers and was detrimental to effective project management, but these issues were resolved.



Early DSL was unreliable and was considered inadequate for mission-critical office applications, so dial-up capacity was retained as a backup. Improvements to DSL in general and the use of high quality Cisco equipment have greatly improved its reliability and those improvements were sufficient to justify the decision to use it for the VPN.

In the early stages the lack of a low-end DSL business product also meant that small sites could not get the full benefit of the VPN.

## Key lessons

- A supportive organisational culture encourages creative solutions.
- Planning is essential to create a vision and a strategy to reach it.
- Staff must understand the vision and have the skills and dedication to achieve it.
- Testing and pilot programs are essential.

## References

Wesley Mission [www.wesleymission.org.au](http://www.wesleymission.org.au)

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

## More information

In these case studies, communities, nonprofit organisations and groups share their experiences and lessons they have learnt using ICT: enhancing capability and service delivery; supporting and building communities, networks and connections; and overcoming barriers and challenges.

*Australia's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004–2006* emphasises the need to ensure that all Australians can participate in the benefits of the information economy.

Key strategies in 2004–06 will be to strengthen collaboration and capabilities in nonprofit organisations, facilitate the creative use of ICT for building stronger communities and social cohesion, and develop networks, capabilities and tools to enable participation by people who are facing economic, geographic or social barriers.

**For more information visit the DCITA website [www.dcita.gov.au](http://www.dcita.gov.au) or email [community.connectivity@dcita.gov.au](mailto:community.connectivity@dcita.gov.au).**

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