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GCOMM AND COMMUNITY HOUSING:
A PARTNERSHIP BUILT ON TRUST

Learn how GCOMM helped Community Housing cut Internet costs, increase the speed and reliability of their network and improve staff productivity by 20%.

Outdated network infrastructure unable to support future growth and demands of the business

Keeping its workforce connected became a challenge for Community Housing Ltd (CHL), a non-profit provider of affordable housing, as the company began to expand, both regionally within Australia and internationally with offices in other countries. Having experienced rapid growth over the course of several years, CHL struggled to keep its large staff effectively connected across many geographic locations. The company's ageing network had difficulties supporting the use of modern communication tools. This, combined with the fact that CHL relied on multiple telecommunications carriers, led to higher operational costs and lowered productivity, both of which ultimately hindered business growth.

Industry: Not for profit
Employees: 300+
Number of branches: 26 Australian branches and 7 international offices
Headquarters: Melbourne
Website: chl.org.au
Customer since: 2000
GCOMM services: Internet, managed WAN

Community Housing Limited (CHL) is a national and international housing provider delivering affordable housing in four regions of the world. Founded in Australia in 1993, CHL has spread its operations to South Asia, South-East Asia and South America. It currently has a portfolio of more than 11,000 properties under management in Australia across six states.

CHALLENGES

- Redundant Internet lines incur unnecessary operational costs

- Poor connectivity speed impedes communication between geographically separate offices, particularly branches located in remote regions of the country

- Communication issues result in lowered staff productivity

- Outdated network does not support the use of modern communication solutions

- Existing infrastructure can no longer facilitate scalable business growth

Starting with one office in the early 1990's, within 25 years CHL has expanded across six states of Australia and four overseas territories. In the last five years alone, the company has experienced rapid growth and brought onboard 200 new employees. To be able to maintain seamless communication between offices and staff in different geographic locations, the business relies heavily on modern collaboration and communication tools, such as video conferencing, which require a reliable, high-speed Internet connection.

Prior to engaging with GCOMM, however, some of the regional offices in remote parts of Australia had to contend with poor network speeds. This affected communication between geographically dispersed teams and had a negative impact on productivity. Over time, CHL started adopting cloud-based technologies and collaboration tools, such as IaaS and SaaS, which exacerbated the need for a more secure, reliable and faster network. When Jamie Woodland was appointed Head of Technology at Community Housing Ltd, a network upgrade was long overdue.

> " *"If I had to pick one thing that differentiates GCOMM from other providers, it would be trust. It takes many years to build trust and a second to lose it. GCOMM has never disappointed. I've been in this industry for more than 20 years and have dealt with many IT and managed services providers. GCOMM is head and shoulders above everyone else."* – Jamie Woodland, Head of Technology, CHL

At the time when Woodland came onboard, GCOMM had already been one of CHL's Internet providers for more than 10 years, along several other vendors, which provided IT support and managed services. The IT infrastructure implemented by another provider was proving to be detrimental to the organisation. Unnecessary Internet lines were costing the company money, while having to deal with multiple external providers made it difficult to manage relationships. When the need for an upgrade became pressing, management felt confident that GCOMM had the right expertise to deliver the project.

Network upgrade enables faster, more reliable communication between geographically distant offices

CHL management knew that it was time they consolidated their support and managed services. Beyond that, however, the company needed a major network upgrade in order to improve network speeds, scalability and reliability, as well as to reduce costs. With that goal in mind, GCOMM and CHL started planning an upgrade of the entire national network.

Most regional offices had poor Internet connectivity, which created communication issues and incurred additional costs. One of the main project priorities was to minimise downtime in the event of an outage. Management were aware that relying on one single connectivity provider posed risks – in the event of a network outage all communication lines could be lost. The company wanted to be able to failover to a secondary carrier that could provide redundancy and mitigate downtime in case of an outage.

> "*Rolling out such a complex project with minimal disruptions and maximum success is a testament to GCOMM as a provider and as people, and their ability to deliver. I was so thankful I could step back and let it happen. It has taken off a huge load of stress from me. It made my job so much easier because I knew we were in good hands. It was one of the smoothest projects I've dealt with in the last 20 years,*" shared Woodland.

GCOMM experts rolled out a plan for designing a network solution that would encompass 26 sites across Australia. A hybrid MPLS and SD-WAN model was deployed at the company's headquarters, while local offices were supplied with SD-WAN connections. To ensure seamless failover at remote offices, additional 4G Meraki devices were supplied at these locations.

Employee productivity goes up while operational costs drop significantly

Following project roll-out, the cost of Internet across the network has been significantly reduced. One of the regional offices in Bairnsdale experienced the most dramatic results. The monthly Internet cost went down from $4,000 to just $300 while at the same time the connection speed went up from 4Mbps to 40-50Mbps, a staggering increase of 2,500%. As part of the project, redundant links were implemented, and two new offices were added. The resultant costs came down by approximately $2,000 a month, allowing to company to realise valuable savings.

Improved network reliability allows staff to communicate and carry out day-to-day business with ease. Today, CHL teams use video conferencing far more frequently than before. For the company's finance department, it has become the main communication tool. The team uses video conferencing exclusively to conduct their meetings – something that was once impossible. All of this has led to an impressive 20% increase in productivity.

"GCOMM's work was absolutely fantastic – from start to finish! All the way from the design and planning phases to project roll-out and hand-off – everything went smoothly. The project management was superb. We had weekly calls with our project manager who kept us informed and up to date on everything that was happening, addressing challenges and making decisions. The communication to our staff was excellent. We always knew what was happening and what was coming next." said Woodland.

CHL management feel that the project has demonstrated GCOMM's level of expertise, knowledge and professionalism, and has also strengthened the relationship with their provider of choice. Moving forward, the company is keen on nurturing the excellent relationship they have with GCOMM.

"You don't see an organisation's true colours until there is an emergency or a critical failure. GCOMM is always on top of everything, providing timely communication and keeping us up to date. The response from the support staff is almost instant," explains Woodland, adding that:

"GCOMM is always looking out for us and what's in our best interest. They really care about providing the right solution, not just selling us the next thing. At the end of the day, its' not about technology and routers and switches. It's about people helping people. It's about finding the right partner to help you in your day-to-day work and make your life easier. GCOMM is the right partner for us."

TO GIVE BUSINESSES THE POWER TO
ACHIEVE MORE USING TECHNOLOGY.

GCOMM is a multi-award winning Australian technology company. Our purpose is to provide businesses with strategic consulting to empower them to thrive in tomorrow's digital world. It is through ongoing innovation that we have continued to provide our clients with best-of-breed technology solutions. We combine our strong network foundation, engineering capabilities and partnerships with leading technology vendors to enable our customers to transform their business.

Get in touch today to speak with a GCOMM Solutions Consultant about your business objectives.

Need help?

Call us on **1300 221 115** or contact your **GCOMM Account Manager.**

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