

NEC Total Telephony Support Solution Brings National Benefits to Elders

ELDERS

Since 1839, Elders has been an integral part of Australia's rural landscape. Across 550 branches – ranging from remote outback trading posts to important regional hubs – Elders provides rural producers with services, products and support in the core areas of wool, livestock, rural finance, insurance, merchandise and real estate.

They're part of an industry where vast distances are a reality and reliable communications are all important. Yet for Elders, communications had become problematic.

The diverse nature and long history of the company meant the development of the Elders voice network has been ad hoc, disparate and involved multiple vendors.

What Elders needed was a new approach to effectively and efficiently manage the national voice network.

The Solution

For Elders' voice communications team, led by Administration Manager, Giorgina Gauci, the need to find a total telephony support solution had reached a critical point.

"In the past, our branches often made their own arrangements for installation and maintenance of their telephone systems," said Gauci. "What we needed was one company that could effectively manage our national voice network."

"The cost savings to the company are not only at the equipment level. We don't have to retrain our staff when they are transferred between sites because the phone system now works in exactly the same way," said Gauci.

Under the guidance of Gauci, Elders undertook a comprehensive vendor selection process, looking for a company that could best integrate the required support services and effectively deliver them. And that's where NEC Business Solutions came on board.

NEC was engaged to undertake an audit of Elders' network that involved a comprehensive equipment inventory and advice on upgrade costs. The audit not only revealed telephony equipment from five different vendors, but that equipment makes and models varied markedly from site to site. In addition, numerous maintenance agreements, service contracts and differing support processes were in place for Elders' end users.

According to Gauci, the existing arrangements were not only management resource intensive and complicated, but were affecting internal and external customer service.

Empowered by Innovation

NEC

case study

“The audit was absolutely critical for Elders,” said Gauci. “By providing a coherent picture of the whole network and relevant support contracts, the audit allowed us to plan for future upgrades and maintenance and improve the network’s availability.”

“The lack of a telephony asset register, for instance, made planned maintenance difficult. Most faults were identified upon occurrence, and delays in fixing them had the potential to affect our network up time.”

As a direct result of the audit, telephone systems at many of Elders’ branches were upgraded to NEC Xen PBX telephony switches, and a total support solution implemented utilising NEC’s maintenance and help desk services – NECare – for operational and user support.

NEC’s Elders account manager, Rick Grabowski, said customers were often surprised to find out that a one-stop solution for communication support existed.

“Elders had a very complicated product and service mix, so having one expert manage the entire process was an attractive option,” said Grabowski.

“With NECare, we’ve subsumed all Elders’ separate arrangements with other vendors and carriers. This enables Elders to focus on its core business while leaving help desk calls and network management to the specialists.”

The NECare contract provides service and support for all of Elders voice and data equipment from a range of manufacturers including NEC, Commander, Panasonic, Ericsson (PABX) and Fujitsu (PABX).

“We are delivering real value to our customers by providing an integrated core network maintenance service, wrapping around it a number of service delivery layers and incorporating specialist support services to manage the overall service delivery,” said Grabowski.

The NEC solution is a welcome change for Gauci, who’s been driving the project since 2000. Around 200 of Elders’ 550 sites are now using NEC equipment.

“The cost savings to the company are not only at the equipment level. We don’t have to retrain our staff when they are transferred between sites because the phone system now works in exactly the same way,” said Gauci.

“We will now continue to gradually migrate our existing systems based on the ongoing audit results, and in the future, hope to achieve further savings on network costs.”

“As for the future? Our long term vision with NEC Business Solutions is to look at converging our voice and data networks to form a single cost-effective national network.”

PROBLEM

- Disparate vendors
- Multiple contracts
- Lack of asset management
- Differing support processes

PROCESS

- Audit of communications network
- Advice on upgrade costs and equipment

SOLUTION

- Key telephone system and PABX
- NECare national support contract service and support for all of Elders voice and data equipment from a range of manufacturers including NEC, Commander, Panasonic, Ericsson (PABX) and Fujitsu (PABX)
- Managed migration plan
- Future vision for voice over internet protocol

About NEC Business Solutions

NEC Business Solutions Ltd is a leading provider of end-to-end voice applications and data solutions for business and government. The company utilises its expertise in IP Telephony, Contact Centres and Managed Services, and strong partnerships with other leading companies to provide innovative and affordable business solutions.

A wholly owned subsidiary of NEC Australia, NEC Business Solutions employs 750 staff nationally.

About Elders Limited

Headquartered in Adelaide, South Australia, Elders Limited is one of Australia's largest rural production and services groups. The company has substantial operations in the banking, insurance, livestock, wool, risk management and real estate industries and employs more than 6,000 people in Australia and overseas.