



Lutheran Aged Care and Albury Telephone Systems

Communications overhaul provides new life to aging system

The Customer

Lutheran Aged Care (LAC) opened their first facility in 1960 in Albury, NSW. They have since grown to support more than 450 people across their residential sites and in-home care. LAC comprises a team of 350 staff with 100 additional volunteers providing support.

Their residential care facilities include:

- **Dellacourt**, 122-beds for health decline, dementia and respite
- **Yallaroo**, 60 beds for health decline, dementia and respite
- **Emily Gardens**, 30 beds for general and special care.

LAC also has two retirement villages: Pemberton View Retirement Village (35 residences) and Nicholson Park Village (17 residences). These retirement villages comprise both two and three-bedroom houses.

As at 30 June 2019, the occupancy rate across LAC's three residential facilities was 96.7%, above the industry average of 94.4% (LAC Annual Report 2019). The organisation's strong financial position allowed it to reinvest \$1.2m back into the improvement of facilities (LAC Annual Report 2019).

In providing aged care services, LAC is mindful of industry scrutiny, new regulatory standards, the necessity of prudent financial management and rising customer expectations of both residents and their support networks. The delivery of quality care is essential to remaining competitive in the industry.

Overview

Industry

- Health / aged care

Challenges

- Existing technology approaching its end-of-life with the mandatory requirement for communications system to be upgraded from ISDN to NBN based technologies
- Integrating Nurse Call functionality into facility communications with the replacement system
- Upgrading multiple sites at once that include cases requiring delicate and uninterrupted health care

Solution

- NEC SV9100 Unified Communications platform
- Single digit access for resident's services
- Door control and alarm integration
- Nurse Call integration
- IP DECT mobility

Results

- Improved user experience for aged care residents
- Successful upgrade to a future-proof NBN based platform
- One central communications provider for easier and more transparent management of communication infrastructure on LAC sites
- Improved safety for residents with more reliable systems driving critical care communications.

The Challenges

LAC's commitment to the sustained provision of quality care meant significant investment in the underlying technology systems that helped provide that service. From a new online food service program, its care management system, the learning management platform for staff, to the organisation's phone system.

LAC's phone system was at end-of-life and needed an upgrade. The mandatory migration from ISDN to NBN also necessitated a contemporary telephony system that could be relied upon for any future technological changes. Most importantly, the upgrade supports that most essential function – communication. Having a reliable communications platform for residents helps maintain their connection with family and friends.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, aged care facilities needed to adapt and provide a communication platform for their residents; who in some cases, are restricted from in-person visits by family and friends. This desired solution needed to be reliable and secure, but also easy to use for residents and facility staff alike.

The Solution

In partnership with NEC Australia, Albury Telephone Systems (ATS) revamped the telecommunications ecosystem using the NEC SV9100 Unified Communications platform as the backbone. With this, residents have an all-inclusive phone and internet service, a step up from the previous 'time-based' system.

The NEC SV9100 Unified Communications solution will be easier to navigate for residents, particularly for those suffering varying degrees of dementia. Albury Telephone Systems noted a key focus in this transition was the need for Nurse Call to have an integration pathway with the facilities information and communications technologies. This was not an option with the previous system.

With the upgrade, residents will be able to dial a single digit for assistance, meals, community centre movie times, property maintenance as well as more easily reach family and friends through voice or video.

Adam Dixon, partner at Albury Telephone Systems, says the company's relationship with NEC goes back to 1993. Adam says upgrading not one but three independent and high dependency aged care facilities with its two retirement villages was a simple task

We understand the importance for not only operational reasons, but the peace of mind that comes with the staff and residents having the best available communications technology at their disposal.

Adam Dixon

Albury Telephone Systems



with NEC's feature rich systems. All sites act as one system with full transparency and contactability available across all sites.

"Building a strong relationship has been critical in understanding and deploying solutions that meet our clients' needs," Adam Dixon said.

"We understand the importance for not only operational reasons, but the peace of mind that comes with the staff and residents having the best available communications technology at their disposal".

"NEC, through its trusted platforms, gives all stakeholders just that," he said.

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Albury Telephone Systems

The Results

"Prior to the roll-out, having residents communicate directly with telecommunications carriers to connect telephone lines and internet to their own home in the retirement villages or facilities would lead to costly and stressful situations for both internal and external stakeholders," said Wendy Rocks, Managing Director of LAC.

"By ensuring communications systems are now managed internally, this removes any negative external roadblocks whilst also greatly decreasing costs of telecommunications services by having one central communications provider," she said.

Business Development Manager for LAC, Louise Shields, says not only has the roll-out given them the visibility they did not have previously, but it has also given them the chance to "...hold up a mirror to ourselves and see what we can be doing better".

From a resident perspective, the new communications system means that new residents can move into a village with their telephone and internet active from their first day, with consumer-focused bundled deals of high-to-unlimited data allowances.

It has also given residents the ability to connect smart devices, stream content services such as Netflix and stay connected with their family and friends via a high-speed, reliable internet connection.

The improvement in the technology solution has also allowed for services such as Nurse Call, real-time location and access control to be integrated into the core network and accessible across all sites.

Both LAC and ATS have agreed that the roll-out was an overall success and has future-proofed the aged care group, meeting their business requirements of an effective, enterprise-grade communications solution ensuring peace of mind for residents and accountability and greater visibility for staff.

Albury Telephone Systems worked closely with vendors; NEC Australia, Spectralink, Advance Care, CyTrack Intelligence Systems and Extreme Networks to design and deliver a robust communications networking incorporating IP connectivity across the 3 Lutheran Aged Care sites and 2 Retirement Villages.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [report](#), a boy born in 2016–2018 can expect to live to the age of 80.7 years and a girl would be expected to live to 84.9 years compared to 47.2 and 50.8 years, respectively, in 1881–1890

Former Vice President - Infrastructure and Communications for NEC Australia Sam Iacono underlined the importance of NEC's involvement in this upgrade project;

"At NEC, our greatest strengths include our superior Information and Communication Technology assets, cultivated over a history spanning 118 years, and our ability to integrate and combine these and deliver them to our customers".

"Making the best use of these strengths, we endeavour to provide social value to our customers as well as for people in countries and regions across the world.

"NEC has a proud track record of not only developing but integrating our technologies as our partners and customers require it."

"That's why many of our relationships with Channel Partners has spanned decades and their customers keep coming back to us for innovative options for upgrading their existing investments," Sam Iacono said.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



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Sam Iacono

Former Vice President - Infrastructure and Communications, NEC Australia

For more information:



nec.com.au



contactus@nec.com.au



131 632

Corporate Headquarters (Japan)
NEC Corporation
www.nec.com

Australia
NEC Australia Pty Ltd
www.nec.com.au

North America (USA)
NEC Corporation of America
www.necam.com

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