



Case Study: Wingecarribee Shire Council

Impending ISDN termination forced urgent action for local council

Impending termination of ISDN lines forced urgent action for Wingecarribee Shire Council. The Council needed to replace the PBX, and also wanted to take advantage of the many features and benefits of cloud communications. After a competitive procurement process, the Council engaged CommsChoice to review the range of available IP solutions. As the Council was already operating Microsoft Office 365 it was determined that the CommsChoice Direct Routing for Microsoft Teams on Office 365 service offering was the most suitable solution.

Situation

Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC) was earmarked to have its ISDN services decommissioned in late 2019. Unfortunately, a change in IT management at a critical point in time resulted in the connection details being overlooked.

It was only when a final disconnection notice was issued regarding the impending termination of the Council's ISDN lines that the issue came to the attention of the IT team.

This impending termination forced rapid action.

John Crawford, Chief Information Officer, Wingecarribee Shire Council (the Council or WSC) said the Council had previously been using an older generation PBX that was not capable of carrying IP voice.

"We were forced to look at which of the available options could be implemented within a tight time frame, and also took the opportunity to identify a wish list of things we wanted from a new solution. We wanted a tool that enabled better collaboration, something to fit with the Microsoft suite, a solution that enabled video conferencing between sites, mobility, and to increase our Disaster Recovery capability. We also wanted a solution that was non-site dependent."

John said, "We knew that Skype for business would be decommissioned soon, so that sent us down the Microsoft Teams path. We could see that Teams would deliver benefits from collaboration and traditional system point of view and it would offer additional services and benefits to Council."

After a rigorous and competitive procurement process, Council selected CommsChoice to review the range of IP solutions available. CommsChoice is a member of the LG Procurement Panel, which streamlined the whole procurement process and assisted Council when engaging them to complete the project.

"The services offered by CommsChoice have been flawless, and their project and sales teams have been fantastic."

John Crawford,
Chief Information Officer,
Wingecarribee Shire Council

Solution

As WSC was already operating Microsoft Office 365 it was determined that the CommsChoice service offering, Direct Routing for Microsoft Teams on Office 365, was the most suitable solution.

Direct Routing for Microsoft Teams (DR4T) provides direct dialling capability for both landline and mobile calling from a single, dedicated geographic number integrated with Microsoft Office 365 Teams. It allows businesses to deliver and manage their business communications from a single, integrated platform regardless of where their staff are located. DR4T leverages the Cloud to allow users to communicate through chat, meetings, video and voice calls to anyone inside and outside an organisation. It also allows companies to use their existing VoIP, ISDN or PSTN numbers.

Tristan Plummer, CTO, CommsChoice, said that the company was engaged to migrate the ISDN services to IP voice using MS Teams Phone System via MS direct routing for 330+ users over multiple sites. “The project included porting the Councils DID ranges (and inbound 1300 numbers) and co-ordinating the delivery of voice into the MS Teams Direct Routing solution. It also included the supply of Teams handsets to around 130 staff.”

Result

DR4T went live late August 2019. The project was completed within 10 weeks, from the initiation of the agreement to the go live date.

John Crawford said, “We had such an aggressive timeline. 10 weeks from conception to connection is very quick. It was a sensational result. CommsChoice delivered our platform and added a lot of value to the whole process, such as introducing us to a range of suppliers and vendors and helping us with headsets and other add-ons.

There are a few reasons why we chose CommsChoice. Price point was one of them, along with exceptionally good references. But I think the main reason was because they were flexible and willing to work with us, it was clear they wanted to ensure the project was a success. There was transparency and holding hands from conception to completion.”

Tristan said, “We established a small service delivery project team within CommsChoice to ensure the successful coordination of the delivery of services, hardware and porting. This team maintained regular contact with the Council right through to successful delivery and project completion.”

John said, “CommsChoice was always happy to meet us face to face, as a regional based Council, that brought additional confidence that they could deliver the project. The services offered by CommsChoice have been flawless, and the project and sales teams have been fantastic.

Microsoft Teams has changed the way Council communicates, and that has come with some

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challenges. We had been using traditional telephony services and of course email, and the change has been difficult for many people. We have put staff through training and are revisiting that again now.

However great features like click to dial, team boards, and the chat services have slowly spread throughout Council and been embraced. Teams is an emerging platform and although there is risk associated with emerging technology, we have a clear path and know that it will serve its purpose for years to come, rather than a more traditional solution which would have to be revisited in three to five years.

What this solution has enabled for Council is communication anywhere. Teams follows you, enabling mobility and flexible working. It has cut back a lot of administration time, and the soft phone follows the user, enabling Video Conferencing and collaboration with internal parties and external vendors which is very important due to our location and the remote location of some of our sites. It literally brings our partners, customers and vendors to our door.

With CommsChoice, I feel it has been very much a partnership. They have been willing to work with Council, and they have been transparent, honest, and agile throughout the whole roll out," concluded John.

About CommsChoice

CommsChoice Group provides cloud communications for business. The company services mid-tier corporate customers in Australia, Asia and internationally using its cloud based global business phone platform and MS Team Calling/Direct routing integration combined with innovative SD-WAN technology and fibre and NBN access products.

About Wingecarribee Shire

Wingecarribee Shire is the local government area of the Southern Highlands in the state of New South Wales, Australia. The Wingecarribee Shire is around 110 kilometres southwest of the Sydney central business district and is part of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation and to some extent can be considered part of the Southern Tablelands.

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