



Australian Social Security Appeals Tribunal

The Australian Social Security Appeals Tribunal needed to streamline its network infrastructure to support an expansion of its operations and services, and to drive greater IT efficiencies. By implementing Novell® Open Enterprise Server and Novell ZENworks®, the agency simplified its infrastructure, reduced its hardware and software costs and significantly improved support for remote users.

Overview

Established under Australia's Social Security (Administration) Act 1999, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal conducts reviews of administrative decisions made under social security and family assistance laws and by the Child Support Agency, aiming to resolve any perceived injustices in the system. The organisation has approximately 200 members plus 52 civil servants.

Challenge

When the Australian Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) expanded its jurisdiction to cover more legislative areas (the Child Support Agency), the inefficiencies in its existing infrastructure were brought into sharp focus.

Many SSAT members work part-time and away from the organisation's dispersed office locations. With no centralised file server, legal documents stored in one location were effectively unavailable to users in a different location. In addition to causing staff frustration and the duplication of documents across the organisation, the lack of a formal document management system threatened to prevent SSAT from complying with planned national standards for record keeping.

SSAT needed to create a standardised, centrally managed infrastructure that would improve access to information while ensuring

adequate security for sensitive legal documents. The organisation also aimed to improve support for remote users and enable them to work more effectively.

Solution

SSAT planned to combine a desktop refresh for staff located across seven offices with a server consolidation exercise. The SSAT network included a variety of old and unsupported operating systems, running on distributed hardware that was largely underutilised.

Following an evaluation of offers from several vendors, the organisation selected Novell Open Enterprise Server as the operating system for its new consolidated infrastructure. SSAT users now have shared document spaces on the central servers, helping them to find and share important information more rapidly.

"The proposed solution from Novell was the winner in terms of price, flexibility and keeping our options open for the future—plus Novell had excellent references in other government agencies," said Greig Morris, Information Technology Business Manager, Social Security Appeals Tribunal. "Novell Consulting® provided on-site and remote support and training, helping the implementation to run very smoothly."

Australian Social Security Appeals Tribunal at a glance:

Statutory body responsible for reviewing Social Security and Child Support Agency matters

■ Industry:

Government

■ Location:

Australia

■ Solutions:

Novell Open Enterprise Server
Novell ZENworks Desktop

Management

Novell Consulting

■ Results:

- Optimised server usage through consolidation
- Reduced software costs by 30 percent
- Reduced hardware costs by 60 percent
- Empowered staff to directly manage IT resources and access

"The Novell solutions helped us gain more control over our documentation and empower our members to share and re-use information across the agency. We now have a compact, efficient, centrally managed infrastructure that keeps our costs low and offers better opportunities for future development."

Greig Morris

*Information Technology Business Manager
Social Security Appeals Tribunal*



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SSAT also implemented Novell ZENworks Desktop Management, using the software to build a standard operating system image for deployment across its new desktops. In addition to rolling out patches and updates automatically across all PCs, SSAT IT staff can now install and upgrade software remotely, and can set and enforce desktop policies for all users.

The IT team can also remotely troubleshoot issues, logging in to any desktop on the network to apply fixes. Desktop support was previously outsourced to a third-party helpdesk service; with Novell ZENworks, SSAT was able to bring the service back in-house, reducing operational expenditure and improving service levels.

“Our internal staff are naturally better positioned to prioritise support requests and take the appropriate decisions in a timely manner,” said Morris. “Novell ZENworks gives us the tools to support users effectively and with very little effort—ideal for an organisation like ours with a limited number of IT staff.”

SSAT is currently evaluating Novell security and identity solutions to manage authentication for the planned rollout of a company-wide information portal.

Results

The combination of Novell Open Enterprise Server and Novell ZENworks has given SSAT a flexible, secure and easy-to-manage infrastructure that can easily support its planned growth. Employees now have easy access to shared data and documents,

helping them to make better decisions faster, and the organisation will be able to comply more easily with future regulations governing legal record-keeping.

“The Novell solutions have helped us gain more control over our documentation and have empowered our members to share and re-use information across the agency,” said Morris. “We now have a compact, efficient, centrally managed infrastructure that keeps our costs low and offers better opportunities for future development.”

SSAT estimates that it has reduced software licensing costs by 30 percent and hardware costs by 60 percent through its server consolidation initiative. With Novell ZENworks, the IT staff has better control over desktop policies and can respond to helpdesk support requests remotely and with greater speed.

Despite bringing the helpdesk back in-house, SSAT has not needed to increase the size of its IT team, and remote control through Novell ZENworks has nearly eliminated the need for IT staff to travel to other offices. Calls to the helpdesk have fallen significantly, thanks in part to the ability to lock users down to a standard operating system image and standard software.

“We are now in a strong position to take on new work and responsibilities,” said Morris. “The Novell team continues to provide great support—with a level of openness and accessibility that makes for an excellent working relationship.”



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