Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
CASE STUDY

Delivering vital health care services to remote indigenous communities requires a dedicated team and the best available use of resources. One organisation who provides Primary Health Care services is Mala'la Health Services Aboriginal Corporation, who provide health services to Maningrida and surrounding areas in North East Arnhem Land.

Maningrida is a remote indigenous community in Arnhem Land Northern Territory, 520 km east of Darwin and 300km north east of Jabiru, with a population in excess of 3000 making it the largest remote Aboriginal community in the NT.

Mala'la Health Service has provided funding to the Maningrida Health Centre to deliver primary health services to the community such as GPs, pharmacists and vaccination programs. Having recently taken over service delivery from the Northern Territory Government, Mala'la needed to ensure the smooth implementation of a critical IT system known as Communicare.

Communicare helps streamline and improve operational efficiencies in Australian healthcare organisations by recording and creating a single source of patient information to improve service delivery, reporting, and decision making.

 "For our clients in the Maningrida community, not having this system in place could put us in a very serious situation. If something went wrong, and we had no records we could default to, we could be compromising the health of individuals. This is why it's so important that this transition from the previous system to Communicare happened as seamlessly as possible."

Ray Matthews, CEO - Mala'la Health Services Aboriginal Corporation

Delivering this system in a remote community with very limited available WAN (Wide Area Networks) bandwidth would be a challenge for any organisation. Mala'la also has a small team with minimal infrastructure expertise and a limited budget as a not-for-profit community organisation. Additionally, the geographical constraints are unique, as getting onsite support is difficult with their main office in a remote location that is often inaccessible by road.

Mala'la staff need high availability of access to Communicare, from any location, as this system is vital for meeting the health care needs of the Maningrida community. For this reason, Mala'la turned to their long-term IT partner Area9 for advice on the best avenue for delivering Communicare within their technical constraints and budget.

A hosted solution to deliver much needed reliability

After consulting with Area9, Ray and the team at Mala'la asked for a range of options based on their existing services and relationship. The best path forward was deemed to be hosting the Communicare system in Area9's Datacentre which offered a range of benefits including:

- high-availability access from all Mala'la offices from a hosted server
- using Remote Desktop Services (RDS) to minimise WAN bandwidth requirements
- 24/7 uptime for guaranteed reliability of the system

"We've got a solid relationship with Area9, and we've been pleased with what they've been able to provide for this solution. They've been very helpful in being able to provide options and opportunities to move forward, because we don't have the level of internal expertise we need for these complex technology decisions. So, we're relying on Area9 to provide user friendly advice for making the best decision for our budget".

Ray Matthews, CEO - Mala'la Health Services Aboriginal Corporation

Another crucial benefit for Mala'la is the ability to pay for the solution on a consumption-based model. Without the need to make upfront CAPEX (capital expenditure) investments in infrastructure, Mala'la simply pays for the solution through a predictable monthly bill based on usage requirements. This gives them the ability to rapidly increase or decrease resources as their future requirements change.

After evaluating a range of different options, Area9 provided Mala'la with two designs that were most feasible, before setting up a pilot environment to test the performance of the chosen option. Area9's Project manager then worked with Mala'la to perform testing and evaluation of the pilot environment.

Cost-effective scalability for reliable service delivery

With a limited capital budget, the hosted solution from Area9 enables Mala'la to provision the Communicare solution through an OPEX (operational expenditure) model. As Mala'la's main office is in a remote location, the solution doesn't require any additional infrastructure or vendor application software onsite for normal business operation. With very limited WAN bandwidth to the main office, the solution also minimises the WAN bandwidth required.

Overall, the solution by Area9 has meant the cost and time to implement, upgrade, and resolve problems is minimised. Although there is an inability to provide dedicated onsite support, support can still be provided remotely, from Area9 and Communicare, meaning an onsite presence isn't necessary for application deployment, troubleshooting, and user assistance. As a business-critical application, Communicare is provided on highly available and reliable infrastructure, with automated rapid recovery for most issues.

"Being able to come in, assess our needs, and get to the bottom of the Communicare system was the real value that Area9 provided in the project. At every stage, we've felt comfortable that Area9 has the expertise to offer the right solution, and they've given us the confidence that the transition to this new system will provide the stable and cost-effective reliability we need to deliver healthcare services to the Maningrida community."

Ray Matthews, CEO - Mala'la Health Services Aboriginal Corporation

Area9 Enterprise

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