

MetroMesh™ Success Story

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The Wireless Bush

The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education is comprised of campuses, annexes, and study centres in 44 locations throughout the Northern Territory and across northern Australia. They offer additional educational opportunities to indigenous students, nearly all of whom live in very small, very remote communities. One to two week workshops are held throughout the region, but often students are brought into the main campus in Batchelor, an old mining town of 500 people located 100 km south of Darwin.

As with any educational group, Internet access has many benefits: access to online resources, distribution of course materials, and better interaction between students and teachers. Students recognize this, and laptops are more common. At the Institute, every student has an email address. Students can receive notification of distance-learning workshops; prepare in advance for upcoming classes, start on assignments when they arrive on campus; and, more easily ask questions and receive answers throughout the course.

According to Martin Heskins, Director Finance & Infrastructure for the Institute, "Everyone, students and staff alike, are more sophisticated technology users than they were just a few years ago. Technology and the Internet can help us get more out of our educational experience."

A few years ago the Internet connection into the campus data centre was upgraded to 10 megabits per second. Staff knew that providing access throughout the campus, including residential quarters, would greatly enhance the learning process. The cost of running Ethernet cabling to each of the buildings was prohibitive. Student

In addition, the Institute wanted to make Internet access to those staff that live in town.

NEC Business Solutions proposed using Tropos Networks™ MetroMesh™ products to create a metro-scale wireless network. Tropos® products eliminate the need to install dedicated cabling between buildings, and greatly minimize the number of connections between the wireless routers and the wireline LAN. Based on standards-based 802.11 Wi-Fi, it eliminates the need to install specialized subscriber equipment, dramatically reduces customer support issues, and delivers true broadband speeds – 1-5 megabits per second.

Once the decision was made to proceed, the Institute performed some initial site preparation. Once the Tropos products arrived, NEC was able to bring the system online in a couple of months. The network provides services to 400 users, including students, and staff. Due to the workshop methodology this means that potentially a different 250 students can gain access every week. As well, they were able to expand coverage to the 200 children and teachers at the town's school.



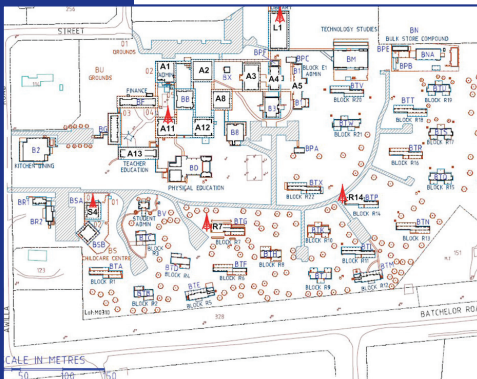
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“The staff feedback has been very positive,” says Mr. Heskins. “And, we’re finding that productivity is improving because people can respond more quickly.”

Martin Heskins, Director Finance & Infrastructure for the Batchelor Institute



Tropos Networks products are built to withstand harsh, outdoor environments. Outside temperatures can average 34 degrees C in the tropical wet, with lows average 14

degrees C overnight in the dry season. Three months of torrential monsoons can stress any outdoor equipment. The purpose-built hardware, designed for harsh, outdoor environments, performs without a hitch.

The system offers wireless connectivity to all authorized users. Maintaining a list of hundreds of approved users is made easier with Tropos Networks' centralized administration tools. Changes and additions are only applied once, and instantly replicated throughout the network. New users are quickly added, and problems can be resolved quickly. Students can stay connected and make the most of their time on campus. Tropos Networks metro-scale wireless networks are quicker to deploy, less expensive to maintain, easier to expand, and cost less to purchase than other competing wireless technologies. Tropos technology has been deployed in over 500 cities and 30 countries worldwide.

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