Council Opens up Endless Possibilities to Support Staff, Business, and Enable its Community to Grow

Ip.Glass Case Study

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– Cameron McNaught, Infrastructure Services Team Leader, Hornsby Shire Council

Customer
Hornsby Shire Council

Industry
Government

Location
Sydney, Australia

Business Impact

- Improved security posture and capabilities to assist in achieving Essential Eight and ISO 27001 compliance
- A 50% saving on annual communications spend
- Greater visibility across all sites, with more granular site-by-site security and control
- Ability to rapidly and securely connect new sites, and improve user experience everywhere
- Improvements in network performance, redundancy, and resilience
- A platform to deploy future smart cities technology and other innovation

Hornsby Shire Council has local government responsibility for a region in the northern suburbs of Sydney, home to more than 150,000 people and covering approximately 510 square kilometres, including 6,000 hectares of public parks, waterways and bushland. The Council's future vision is guided by four key themes – liveable, sustainable, productive and collaborative – and an initiative to embrace emerging technology and optimise existing digital assets.

Fundamental to achieving these goals for the Council is connectivity, says Cameron McNaught, Infrastructure Services Team Leader at Hornsby Shire Council. "We needed a network across all of our locations that was secure, gave us redundancy with no single points of failure, and made all our staff feel like they're in head office regardless of where they were working."

The completion of a broadband fibre to the premises (FTTP) rollout by NBN Co was the catalyst for the Council to explore options to replace its legacy MPLS network which was inflexible, costly to manage, had single points of failure, and poor bandwidth performance to branch sites. The legacy network also gave no opportunity for the Council to connect IoT equipment, sensors and other smart devices. That limited the Council's ability to achieve its future smart cities goals.

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The Council was already working with Fortinet partner and network and security services provider Ip.Glass, who recommended the Fortinet SD-WAN solution. “We have been partners with Ip.Glass for many years, and it has always been a great relationship. Their advice has always been sound. We can call on them and everything gets done quickly, to a very high quality and professional level,” said McNaught.

“Fortinet SD-WAN was a really good story from Council’s point of view; you’ve got a more secure and more flexible product, more resiliency, redundancy, simplicity for less money, and a much better user experience,” he continued.

Choosing the Right Partner

Ip.Glass had recommended Fortinet as the ideal solution for the Council to move away from its legacy networking infrastructure to SD-WAN. The Council was able to make a decision quickly and confidently, thanks to the trust it had developed over its long relationship with the IT services provider.

“Ip.Glass has proven themselves on the work they’ve done with us over the years, so we trusted their advice. We also knew that Ip.Glass had the experience to deploy the technology. They’re very qualified around the Fortinet suite of products, and they’ve done many engagements for us in the past, so we had trust in their ability to execute the project,” said McNaught.

That confidence and trust was borne out in the initial rollout, and then again when the Council recently brought on a new site.

“It was just a matter of contacting Ip.Glass, purchasing a firewall, applying the config from FortiManager and bringing the site up within two days. The new site has built-in redundancy and security already in place, and all done for minimal cost,” said McNaught.

Security First

Security was a critical component of the new network. To meet its cybersecurity challenges and ensure protection for both ratepayers and critical infrastructure, the Council is working towards full compliance with the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) Essential Eight Maturity Model and ISO 27001 standards.

The Fortinet Secure SD-WAN and SD-LAN solution designed and deployed by Ip.Glass is managed centrally via single pane using FortiManager Cloud, which provides extensive visibility to the Council, together with a wide set of cybersecurity controls and tools. That includes centralised device management, real-time monitoring, and security policy based on best practices enforced consistently to all Council locations.

That tighter control of each site extends to safely offering secure public WiFi to ratepayers, as well as introducing advanced cybersecurity capabilities such as EDR (endpoint detection and response) and IPS (intrusion prevention systems).

Cost Savings and Enhanced User Experience

Each site is deployed with FortiSwitch LAN switching, FortiAP WiFi access points and FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall. New sites can be brought securely online and part of the Council’s network within a day. The Council is using commodity NBN broadband links, satellite and 4G/5G services to connect all sites, delivering business grade reliability and performance at a fraction of the cost of its former MPLS connectivity. The Council and Ip.Glass manage the network with a joint support model where Ip.Glass can be reached for expert support and advice as required.

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"We've reduced our spend on communications links alone by at least 50%, which has freed up significant amount of budget. Also, Fortinet's single pane of glass makes managing the network so much easier now and enables us to do a lot more proactive monitoring and troubleshooting, whereas before it was very reactive. With Fortinet, we can actually monitor dashboards and see the whole network. By moving to Fortinet SD-WAN, every council site is its own standalone network, fully segregated, but still part of the whole. It means that if a site goes down, we no longer have a single point of failure," said McNaught.

Ultimately, the biggest positive impact has been for the Council's staff and also its ratepayers, explains Tim Weddell, IT Operations Manager at Hornsby Shire Council: "our users don't see problems anymore, it just works. They are protected everywhere they go, even if they're not on our sites anymore. They don't ask 'why can't I sign in here, or what's the WiFi over there?' It means their focus has moved off IT altogether, and they can focus on their business goals."

Platform for Further Innovation

"There's so many more future technologies in Fortinet that we haven't even turned on yet, which will open up all sorts of possibilities on how we're going to support the staff, the business, the public, and enable the community overall to grow," said Weddell.

Key initiatives to be enabled include smart multi-factor authentication and zero trust network access, which continually verifies who and what is using the Council's resources. That is a central pillar in the Council's future vision. By enabling IoT devices, sensors and other smart equipment to be readily identified and secured, the Council can leverage existing equipment in the field and deploy new infrastructure for a multitude of smart cities and sustainable applications and projects.

The potential of these new technologies will come to the fore in the current transformation of Hornsby Quarry into a unique destination, where the magnificent bush, dramatic quarry walls and lake will take centre stage. Once completed, Hornsby Park will cover approximately 60 hectares of bushland and open space, and feature dramatic lookouts, walking tracks, active and passive recreation spaces and water-based recreation opportunities.

"We have many different IoT and connected devices already deployed, such as CCTV, our parking meters, water quality monitoring systems in our rivers and reservoirs, and moisture monitoring for the watering systems at our ovals. While the Council has had a piecemeal approach to IoT in the past, now we can bring all that back into the technology team and have oversight and a security layer over all these devices as well," said McNaught.

"Fortinet SD-WAN gives us peace of mind, flexibility and innovation," he concluded.

About Ip.Glass

Ip.Glass is a specialist network and network security services provider, delivering complex enterprise services, while maintaining flexibility, agility and being easy to engage and work with.

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