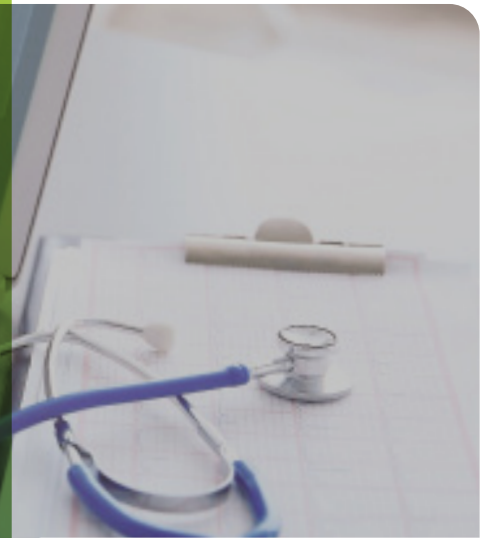


Marie Stopes Australia Accelerates New Patient Services while Keeping a Lid on Costs



A leading reproductive healthcare organization transforms its business by leveraging the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud platform

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Marie Stopes Australia's IT vision is for infrastructure that enhances service delivery rather than inhibiting it. It moved towards that vision in 2018, when it began transforming its ageing server environment towards a private cloud model and outsourcing its entire IT support function. Marie Stopes chose Nutanix as their new platform environment, reaping new levels of uptime, simplicity and innovation. Crucially, Marie Stopes Australia's Nutanix hyperconverged infrastructure solution opens the door to further exciting changes, including the rapid adoption of new applications and new patient services.



“Strategic initiatives in our organisation can mean demands on our infrastructure shift suddenly. With Nutanix, we can simply put a new node in and it will just work. We can upgrade our capacity and our capabilities really quickly, at a pretty low cost.”

- Jamal Hakim, Managing Director, Marie Stopes Australia

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BENEFITS

- Set up and ready for production in just six months
- Zero unplanned downtime since deployment
- “Hands-off” operational simplicity
- Rapid handover of services to providers with one-click
- The agility to scale according to business capacity and capabilities

SOLUTION

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud

- Prism

APPLICATIONS

- CareRight patient management system
- Microsoft Windows Server
- Citrix
- Office 365
- SharePoint
- RiskMan risk management system
- ELMO learning management system
- Legacy payroll system

CHALLENGES

Marie Stopes Australia first offered sexual and reproductive healthcare services in 2001. It has since served over 600,000 Australians and has grown into a national provider with 400 staff and a network of 17 clinics. Its IT infrastructure, based on a traditional and increasingly complex server architecture, serves Marie Stopes Australia, MS Health and the sister agency MSIA. The infrastructure was, however, becoming a barrier to the growth that Marie Stopes Australia's leadership was looking for.

"We'd hit a threshold," the organisation's Managing Director Jamal Hakim explains. "Our technology was based on legacy structures, software and really old servers. The infrastructure was ageing and complex; our servers were pinging each other endlessly and it was very, very difficult to make any meaningful changes. Rather than simply upgrade that infrastructure, we decided on a radical change."

That change came in 2018, when Marie Stopes Australia commissioned a tender for a server infrastructure refresh.

SOLUTION

Marie Stopes Australia partnered with Telstra in the search for a new solution. What they were looking for was a path to the future – a scalable, flexible environment that provided better access to information for front-line staff, paved the way for new services, enhanced service continuity and security, and simplified management, all while keeping a lid on costs.

The proposals ranged from building everything in-house to shifting to the Azure cloud. Using the UK-based IT team from Marie Stopes International as a sounding board, Hakim chose a solution from Nutanix partner Think Solutions.

The new solution offered a highly available dedicated private cloud infrastructure accessed through Marie Stopes Australia's existing Citrix platform. It incorporated disaster recovery, offsite backup and, via Barracuda NextGen firewalls, security. Telephony moved to VoIP and a new national VPN was created.

Driving it all was Nutanix Hyperconverged Infrastructure incorporating three nodes hosted offsite in an Equinix data centre. The Nutanix solution's agnosticism towards hypervisors meant Marie Stopes Australia could run for the time being on Microsoft Hyper-V, which accommodated licencing considerations and aligned with its strategy of using Microsoft solutions.

"It was a solution that was ahead of the curve," says Hakim. "Nutanix was a big part of the decision for us; we liked the interface, the replication functionality and the ability to support additional nodes. Think Solutions is a Nutanix partner and was very familiar with the technology, and that is one of the reasons we chose them."

Paul Baxter, COO of Think Solutions, says Marie Stopes Australia's requirements were familiar. "It was a conversation that we have with our clients all the time. The customer wanted flexibility and scalability but didn't want to spend unnecessary funds on IT infrastructure because IT wasn't the core of its business. As such, Nutanix and the "pay as you grow" model really fit in well with Marie Stopes' vision. We now manage an IT infrastructure that can keep up with the demands and changes of its business. The customer also has peace of mind that downtime is a thing of the past."

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Painless transition completed in just six months

Hakim says the IT transformation project he initiated was significant but largely painless and it gave him the confidence to subsequently extend the contract to include the outsourcing of Marie Stopes Australia's IT support to Think Solutions.

"From our side of things it was quite smooth," Hakim says. "It just worked. We got online with Nutanix without incident and we haven't had any unscheduled downtime due to the transition."

Think Solutions project lead and senior technical consultant Daniel Reid says the project itself was straight forward. "We had the Nutanix cluster provisioned and updated to the latest versions, Hyper-V cluster established and everything up and running within a few days. Then the hard part of integrating, assessing and rebuilding the customer's VM environment was next. From start to finish the project was completed in its entirety in approximately six months."

Hands-off management

Hakim believes the project has done exactly what it was intended to do. For a manager who drives technology change but describes himself as "tech-savvy but not a tech expert", the inherent simplicity of Nutanix Hyperconverged Infrastructure is a boon. He can now literally be hands-off.

"Think Solutions manages the infrastructure for us," he explains. "Even though I have credentials for the Nutanix system, I don't use them. I've never had to log on."

Stress-free handovers with just the click of a button

Marie Stopes Australia is ultimately a healthcare provider. It needs, Hakim says, technology partners that are the best at what they do so his organisation can focus on its mission.

"That means we needed a system that lets us transition easily to a new provider if that becomes necessary, and Nutanix lets us do that," he explains. "For example, we were running our payroll with one company and we weren't happy with it. Because of the solution, we were able to get the vendor to flip a switch and hand over the account administration of our payroll to another organisation. It happened with the click of a button."

Farewell to failures

With its previous environment, Marie Stopes Australia had become rather too accustomed to server failures. That has markedly improved with the new environment, a shift that Hakim attributes to the Nutanix solution's high availability. "In the past, we've always had failures in our servers. Now we know that if one Nutanix node fails, rather than everything going down, other nodes will pick up. We don't have to worry that our servers are going to go offline suddenly."

NEXT STEPS

Hakim's vision is for Marie Stopes Australia's IT environment to foster ongoing change. He calls it a "three-clicks perspective", a strategy that puts the right information in the hands of staff and clients directly and securely. On the to-do list is the adoption of Microsoft PowerApps and electronic client records. At that time, a change of hypervisor will likely be in scope and Hakim says Nutanix AHV is an option.

Nutanix underpins Marie Stopes Australia's IT ambitions. "Our loads are typically very consistent but we do have step changes at times, and we know that at those times we can put a new node in and it will just work," he says. "We can upgrade our capacity and our capabilities really quickly, at a pretty low cost."

Longer term, Marie Stopes Australia's IT transformation may become a model for the organisation's peers. "Our global IT team is that little bit jealous of what we're doing," Hakim explains. "They're actually now starting on a similar project in the UK based on our experience; they'll be replicating our infrastructure to suit their needs, allowing for global learnings as part of this investment."



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