

PARKS VICTORIA CUTS GREENHOUSE IMPACT

Energy-efficient Dell servers and notebooks help Parks Victoria meet its green mandate by slashing electricity consumption by 50 percent



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Gavin Russell, Network Manager, Parks Victoria

SOLUTIONS

- MOBILITY
- VIRTUALISATION

CUSTOMER PROFILE

COUNTRY: Australia

INDUSTRY: Public Sector

FOUNDED: 1996

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 1,000

WEB ADDRESS: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

CHALLENGE

Parks Victoria was required to operate in an environmentally sound manner and needed to further reduce its energy consumption. It also wanted to increase the amount of time its staff could spend out in the field rather than sitting at desks.

SOLUTION

Parks Victoria replaced 44 end-of-lease servers with energy-efficient Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers employing VMware virtualisation software, halving power consumption and eliminating cooling problems. The organisation also replaced desktop PCs with energy-efficient Dell Latitude notebooks, allowing staff to capture data in the field and reducing PC power consumption.

BENEFITS

- Slashed electricity consumption by more than 50 percent
- Avoided a \$100,000 air-conditioning system upgrade
- Cut PC power consumption to one-third of previous levels
- Improved productivity by enabling staff to take notebooks to worksites



The state of Victoria boasts some of Australia's most beautiful national parks, pristine marine sanctuaries and diverse heritage sites. The daunting job of preserving around 3.96 million hectares of land falls to Parks Victoria. The statutory authority manages state-controlled parks and reserves and is required by law to operate in an environmentally sound manner.

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This green mandate underpinned a recent decision to acquire energy-efficient servers and laptops from Dell. Parks Victoria wanted to cut energy consumption, improve the mobility and productivity of its field workers and reduce power costs.

In 2007, the organisation replaced 44 servers with four energy-efficient Dell PowerEdge™ 2950 servers, enabling the organisation to cut power consumption by more than 50 percent. It also purchased 900 Dell Latitude™ D620 and D630 notebooks with installation services, ensuring its staff, including rangers and conservation and environmental specialists, can work more efficiently in the field.

“Dell's green credentials are aligned with ours, and influenced our decision to purchase the company's products,” said Gavin Russell, Network Manager at Parks Victoria. “We're happy with the cost savings we've achieved and even happier that we've minimised our environmental footprint.”

FIELD WORKERS EMBRACE MOBILITY

Established in 1996, Parks Victoria manages 39 national parks, 13 marine national parks, 11 marine sanctuaries, 30 state parks and 37 metropolitan parks. The authority is also responsible for the recreational management of Port Phillip Bay, Western Port and the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers.

Parks Victoria's decision to purchase Dell servers and notebooks was driven by the need to reduce energy consumption and improve employees' working lives.

“Our staff have been screaming for more mobility,” said Russell. “Eighty percent of them work in the field, and they want to capture data on the spot, instead of recording it with pen and paper before returning to the office to enter it into an application.”

The size of some parks means the office can be a two-hour return drive away, so there was

room for significant productivity improvements.

“The notebooks will allow our staff to spend more time in the field and less in the office, which is exactly what they want,” said Russell.

Parks Victoria also wanted to upgrade its server environment. The lease on the organisation's 44 servers was due for renewal, so it took the opportunity to investigate more powerful and environmentally friendlier alternatives.

DELL'S GREEN CREDENTIALS SECURE BUSINESS

Parks Victoria selected Dell as its supplier for several reasons, including the company's green credentials.

“It is a very environmentally conscious company and that was important to us,” said Russell, who cited its leading local recycling and recovery programs as well as the global ‘Plant a Tree for Me’ program as examples. The ‘Plant a Tree for Me’ program, offered

in some countries around the world, enables organisations to offset the carbon emissions of their IT portfolio by contributing funds to facilitate tree planting.

The organisation's comprehensive evaluation quantified the suitability of the Dell Latitude D620 notebook (and subsequently the Dell Latitude D630) for its purposes. The notebooks provide a full-size keyboard without being inconveniently large and heavy. They are also rugged enough to withstand buffeting while driving along bush tracks.

“We haven't had any issues at all – they've been used in snow and in heat,” said Russell.

The authority had considered deploying Dell's semi-ruggedised Latitude ATG, but found the D620 robust enough for most purposes without incurring the additional cost. The D620 and D630 are also sufficiently powerful to support Parks Victoria's scheduled mid-2008 rollout of Microsoft Windows Vista®. However, it may purchase some Dell Latitude ATGs for use in fire situations.

Parks Victoria also based its decision on the state-wide reach of Dell's support network as it wanted the vendor to manage rollout and ongoing maintenance.

“During our last rollout we realised there were occupational health and safety implications in giving the task to our own staff, and the amount of travelling involved meant many unproductive hours,” said Russell. “Giving the job to Dell was cheaper than using our own people.”

Dell's whole-of-government contract with the state of Victoria simplified the procurement process for Parks Victoria, while competitive pricing and excellent reliability sealed the deal.

“We've had reliability problems with other vendors' hardware in the past,” said Russell. “But Dell has been outstanding in terms of dependability and support.”

MOBILITY IMPROVES STAFF PRODUCTIVITY

Parks Victoria replaced its Acer desktop systems with 900 Dell Latitude notebooks, a move designed to cut use of PC power to one-third of previous levels.

Phase one of the project, carried out during 2007, covered regional areas. Systems in metropolitan locations are scheduled for replacement during 2008.

Telstra's Next G™ mobile network provides speedy connectivity to practically all of the 3.96 million hectares managed by Parks Victoria. For security reasons, the notebooks only connect

to the organisation's Citrix portal, with Internet access provided via a proxy server associated with the portal.

Parks Victoria teams use spatial applications to track assets, pests, weeds and other items. A Trimble GPS device connected to the Latitude's serial port automatically records locations. The notebooks also allow Parks Victoria field staff to access administrative applications such as timesheets and other documentation.

The benefits of using notebooks were immediately apparent. One Parks Victoria team previously had to spend two days entering data following its regular week-long field trips. Team members recently took notebooks with them for the first time, and found they regained those two days for ‘real’ work.



DELL™ POWEREDGE™ 2950



DELL™ LATITUDE™ D630

Parks Victoria is also saving power by enforcing a policy that notebooks enter sleep mode after standing idle for two hours. While switching to sleep mode after less time would improve economies, Parks Victoria had to address staff fears that work might be lost when their PC falls asleep. As staff become more familiar with the initiative, Parks Victoria plans to reduce the period before the notebooks switch into sleep mode.

"Our staff seem OK with the concept as they understand the need to reduce power consumption – they're used to the idea of switching off at the wall," said Russell.

CUTTING POWER CONSUMPTION BY 50 PERCENT

Parks Victoria opted to replace its three-year-old Dell servers, of which there were 44, with just four Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers featuring quad-core Xeon® processors. VMware virtualisation software enabled the organisation to easily move the existing Oracle, Microsoft Active Directory, web and file servers onto the new hardware.

"We use Dell servers across the board and we've reduced power consumption by over 50 percent," said Russell. "We estimate that we have cut power costs considerably."

The consequent reduction in heat generation has sidestepped cooling problems in the server room, allowing Parks Victoria to drop a proposed \$100,000 investment in a new air-conditioning system.

"Just about everything except Microsoft Exchange has been virtualised, and we'll be doing that in the near future," said Russell. The only other exceptions are a small number of servers with specific hardware requirements – such as a fax server and its associated interface card – that cannot be virtualised.

"Parks Victoria is already striving to cut its carbon footprint and our new Dell PowerEdge servers and Latitude notebooks cut our energy consumption and allowed our staff to spend more time in the field," said Russell. "That's where they want to be, and where we want them to be."

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HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell PowerEdge™ 2950 servers
- Dell Latitude™ D620 and D630 notebooks
- Dell Optiplex™ 755 desktops
- Dell PowerEdge™ 1950 servers

SOFTWARE

- Microsoft® Windows XP
- Microsoft Office 2003
- Oracle® E-Business Suite
- Microsoft Exchange 2003

SERVICES

- Dell Managed Services to deploy the laptop fleet
- Dell Custom Factory Integration Service

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