



Grace Lutheran College students take full advantage of federal grant with HP technology

Overview

Grace Lutheran College is a co-educational school which operates two campuses north of Brisbane in Rothwell on the Redcliffe Peninsula and also in the Sunshine Coast hinterland town of Caboolture. The College supports a combined student population of 1,666 in Years 7 to 12.

Last year Grace Lutheran successfully applied for a grant in Round One of the Federal Government's National Secondary Schools' Computer Fund. The College based its application on a strategic plan aimed at maximising the potential impact that installing additional computers might have on teaching and learning.

The success of the Round One bid has allowed the College to install 404 additional and replacement computers for its Rothwell campus. Grace Lutheran chose products from Hewlett-Packard (HP) and engaged the services of its existing reseller BES IT Systems to supply and install the new PCs, laptops and servers.

To avoid having to build more computer labs to house the new equipment, the College has invested 60 per cent of the funding in laptops, and has installed a wireless network that allows them to operate virtually campus wide. Additionally, a loan scheme with a pool of 80 laptops has been introduced so students can take their wireless laptops home at night at no extra cost to parents.

In addition to the Head of IT, Peter Kellett, the College now employs a full-time IT graduate to manage the new wireless network and the use of laptops.

Business Challenges

Grace Lutheran College has a fast growing population. Head of IT, Peter Kellett, says the school has had very good value for money out of its IT investment in the past and would probably have bought an additional 100 new PCs a year to go into its computer labs if the Federal funding opportunity had not come its way. The funding has meant that Grace Lutheran has been in a position to buy four times as many computers.

Its Round One grant application was based on a consultative process involving the College ICT Strategic Planning Committee, its ICT Executive Committee and the wider

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school community. An updated ICT Strategic Plan formed a key part of the application which was submitted at the end of Term 2, 2008. The result was an allocation of the full amount requested by the College under Round One of the Fund, a total of \$404,000.

“Work on rolling out this technology started immediately,” said Kellett. “Our deadline was to have 90 per cent of the equipment in place and in use in just three months.”

The College reports it has had a long-standing relationship and good experience with supplier BES IT Systems. With the boost to IT resources of some \$404,000 through the National Secondary Schools’ Computer Fund, there was an opportunity to pursue a more future-oriented IT strategy.

Grace Lutheran turned to reseller BES IT Systems to manage the upgrade which involved the purchase and installation of HP Compaq Notebooks and PCs and HP servers. The College now has some 800 computers, 700 of which can be accessed by students.

Kellett says: “We have had a lot of support from Lutheran Education Queensland and together with HP offering competitive pricing that made the use of the funding to its maximum.”

At the heart of the Grace Lutheran IT revamp is the Federal government’s initiative aimed at improving the ratio of computers to students in all secondary schools to 1:1. Round One funding was designed to allocate resources to secondary schools to allow them to achieve a 1:2 ratio. Further funding rounds and strategies are expected to achieve the goal of 1:1, as well as providing maintenance support and fibre connections where required.

The College has now replaced older computers in existing lab areas and has built an ICT Resource Centre to house up to 80 laptops used by students on campus.

Kellett says: “Another key element in our plan was a series of eight mobile laptop trolleys deployed in areas of highest need across the Rothwell campus. Loan pools that allow students to take computers home at night were established on both the Redcliffe and Caboolture campuses. This has become a hugely valuable initiative for students, especially those who do not have access to PCs at home.

“Software was purchased, furniture built, additional staff employed, power upgraded and support equipment installed. Grace was ready within the initial three month deadline.”

Kellett would like to see the school served by fibre, also on the Federal Government’s agenda.

“This is very relevant to Grace,” he says. “We cannot get the speed that we require via

a normal copper connection. The maximum in our area at present is 8 megabits per second (Mb/s) down and 512 Kb/s up. We are having discussions with UQ Schools Connect about putting in a microwave connection which will very soon give us 10/10 Mb/s and within a couple of years we expect to have fibre."

How HP helped

Kellett notes that the Lutheran approach to IT purchasing is essentially "green". This is something endorsed by HP through its HP eco solutions, energy tips and through its recycling initiatives. Many HP products have a lifecycle of three years, meaning fewer computer replacements, fewer classroom disruptions and a lessened long-term cost of upgrading IT.

"It's about taking a long-term view and choosing the equipment that will benefit the school and the environment in the future. We try to buy computers with low-voltage processors and lower wattage than other PCs," Kellett says. "It is a Lutheran policy. HP equipment uses minimal amounts of power compared with other machines on the market."

In addition, HP's latest business notebook range are ENERGY STAR® Qualified for high energy efficiency and boast HP Illumi-Lite LED displays that are highly efficient, mercury-free LED backlit displays that reduce the use of hazardous materials and can extend battery life by up to 90 minutes.

In line with this, Grace has installed HP Compaq 6720s Notebooks and HP Compaq dc7800 PCs. There are also six new clustered, load-sharing HP ProLiant DL160 G5 and 180 G5 servers.

The success of the Grace installation is attributed to the strong collaboration between HP, Lutheran Education Queensland, the College and BES IT Systems, resulting in a very smooth end-to-end solution, bringing the new devices online in record time and with minimum disruption to the daily workings of the college.

Value delivered

Kellett says: "The whole game has now changed in education. Students have traditionally accessed computers in labs. We still have nine labs and we will still have labs for teaching purposes but we are moving further away from that kind of situation. Eventually we would expect to be about 20 per cent lab-based."

He says: "We think of computers as vital tools - as the pen and ink. We can't maximise the full potential of students without them. This is why we allow our students to take the machines home free of charge.

"As long as you have insurance in place it is fine. All schools should be doing it." He admits that they had anticipated it would take some time for staff and students to catch onto the benefits of the government initiative.

“What we did not anticipate has been the tremendous response from teachers and students as soon as the equipment became available.

“Trolleys of laptops are in constant use on the wireless networks and our laptop loan pool is at 100 per cent utilisation on a daily basis.

“We are very happy with the government program,” Kellett says.

It has allowed Grace Lutheran to improve its ratio of 1:5 computers to students to 1:2.

Summary

Industry: Education

Solution: Install an additional 404 computers, provided by the Federal government, at the same time shifting the emphasis from desktops and computer labs to laptops and a wireless network.

Hardware: HP Compaq 6720s Notebooks; HP Compaq dc7800 PCs; HP ProLiant DL160 G5 and DL180 G5 clustered load-sharing servers.

Software: Microsoft’s Office 2007 and Visual Basic.NET; AutoCAD; eduKate Learning Management System; Adobe Photo Shop and Adobe Premier for film and TV courses; MYOB; CorelDRAW; Quick Book; and careers and language applications.

Challenges: To introduce and integrate into the existing IT environment 404 new computers awarded to Grace Lutheran College under Round One of the Federal Government’s National Secondary School Computer Fund.

About Grace Lutheran College: Grace Lutheran College is a co-educational school, part of Lutheran Education Queensland, which operates two campuses north of Brisbane in Rothwell on the Redcliffe Peninsula and also in the Sunshine Coast hinterland town of Caboolture. It has a student population of 1,666 in Years 7 to 12. The college aims to provide students with spiritual, personal, social, physical and academic growth, supported by a culture of pastoral care and a strong sense of community.

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