EPA Victoria Case Study

How a 30-minute fix revitalised the Environment Protection Authority's wireless network

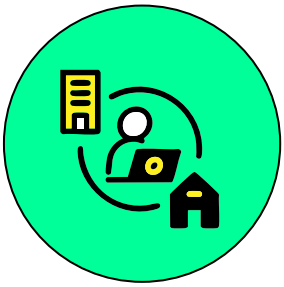
SIDEBAR: AT A GLANCE

Summary:
Victoria's Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was facing recurrent wireless network failures and service provider disputes. Affinity Blue stepped in to swiftly diagnose the root issue and guide the agency toward a more stable network environment.



The situation:

Recurrent network outages and connectivity losses, with all service providers unable to find the root cause.



The solution:

Remote investigation of system configurations, ongoing management of conflicting stakeholders.



The results:

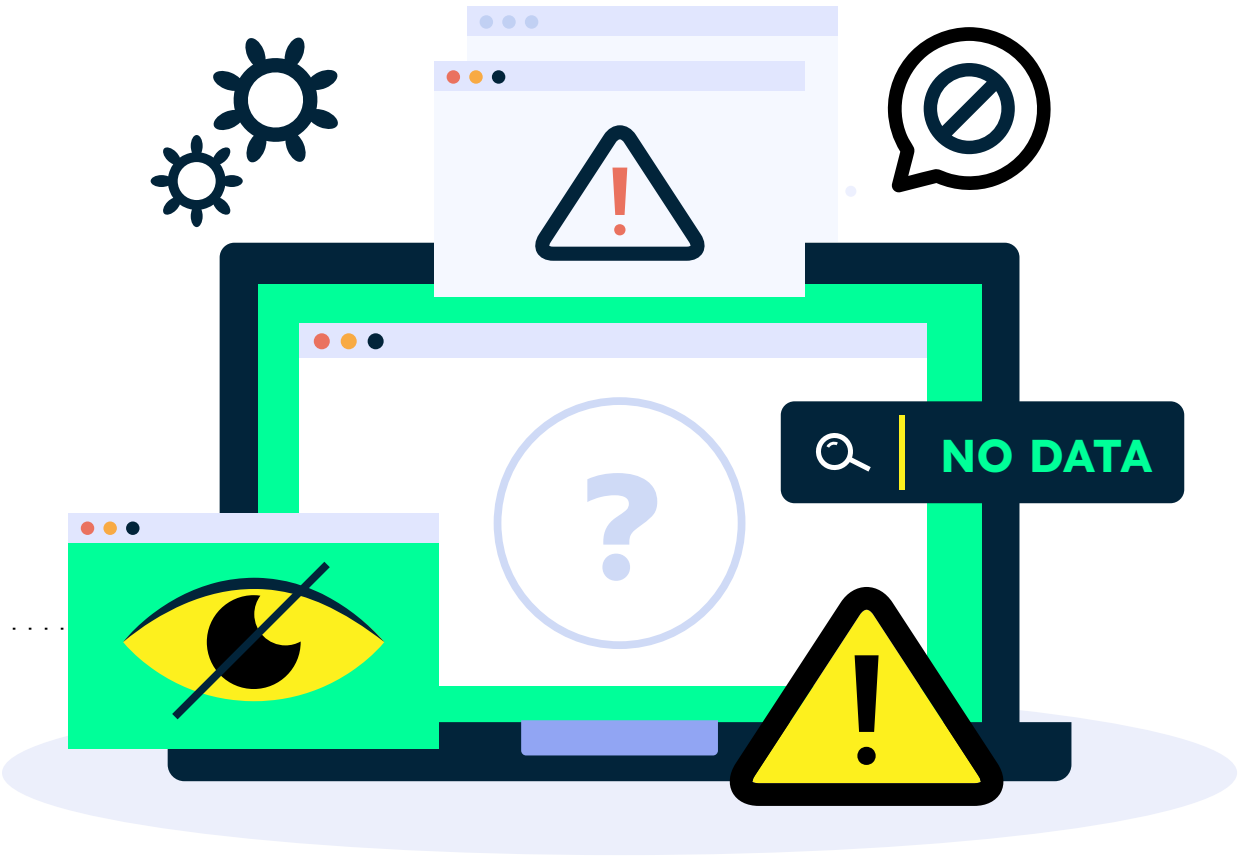
Root cause of issue identified in 30 minutes and eventually resolved after extensive negotiation.

THE SITUATION

EPA Victoria carries the mandate of reducing the harmful effects of pollution and waste statewide – a task that is often as complex as it is weighty. Solid, dependable network infrastructure is paramount to sustaining the EPA's operations. However, the agency found themselves in a protracted struggle with persistent wireless issues: their network, deployed by a major telecommunication provider's technical wing, had suffered from recurring outages and loss of connectivity in critical areas like their boardrooms for more than six months.

"The issue was compounded by a finger-pointing situation between two parties: a government services provider managing the wired network and the telecommunication provider overseeing the wireless network," recalled Neon Islam, Technical Co-Founder of Affinity Blue. "The wireless team blamed the wired infrastructure, and vice versa. Meanwhile, the organisation's wireless network remained practically unusable."

After months of fruitless triaging and troubleshooting, the EPA contacted Aruba, believing the problem was with their already-installed ClearPass system. When Aruba's engineers were unable to immediately identify the issue, they referred the case to Affinity Blue as the experts in wireless diagnostics and troubleshooting.



THE SOLUTION

Within 30 minutes of a remote investigation, Affinity Blue's team identified the cause of the EPA's troubles: a misconfiguration in their radius authentication setup between Juniper/Mist access points and Aruba's ClearPass system. This was causing authentication requests to fail, cutting off connectivity in key areas. "We didn't even need to be onsite to diagnose it," remarked Neon. "The problem was a relatively obscure misconfiguration between the two systems that had gone overlooked."

But resolving the issue wasn't just about making technical changes. Affinity Blue had to navigate weeks of discussions between the government services provider, the telecommunications provider, and the EPA, as both vendors were hesitant to take responsibility for the misconfiguration.

Simon Hayward, Business Co-Founder of Affinity Blue, commented on the situation: "When vendors are reluctant to admit fault, it can delay the resolution process. We just remained focused on the technical facts and worked through the negotiations to get the job done."

The path to resolution involved untangling multiple layers of bureaucracy and internal resistance from the vendors, all while the EPA faced mounting pressure to restore functionality. It took many weeks of lengthy discussions before Affinity Blue was finally given the green light to implement the necessary changes. "Though it required quite a nuanced knowledge of Juniper-Aruba interactivity, the technical fix itself was straightforward, which is in itself a credit to both systems involved," said Simon. "The inter-organisational issues were what made it more complicated."

Once the radius authentication traffic was reconfigured, communication between the access points and ClearPass returned and the network regained full functionality. It was, as Neon recalled, "like magic, it just started working straight away!"

THE RESULTS

The results were immediate and transformative. “It was literally like a 30-minute job,” said Neon referring to how quickly the technical issues were resolved.

With the misconfiguration corrected, the EPA’s wireless network quickly went back online, and critical areas like the boardroom were fully operational once more. Staff were able to connect to the network with ease, restoring productivity where connectivity had been an issue. The EPA as a whole was finally able to resume normal operations without fear of further interruptions.

However, the benefits went beyond just a quick fix and a functional network. Simon reflected on the broader impact: “It wasn’t just about fixing the problem at hand. We wanted to give them the confidence that their network could scale to their needs, so they wouldn’t have to worry about hitting the same issues again.”

That led Affinity Blue to recommend and implement new best practices for the EPA's wireless infrastructure. The technical resolution not only fixed the immediate misconfiguration but also led to ongoing remediation efforts, including the standardisation of configurations to prevent future similar issues across multiple sites; and upgrading the EPA’s ClearPass server to the latest version.

After a great outcome for our business and staff, we’ve since engaged Affinity Blue to provide ongoing support for our Wi-Fi services. They have enhanced the Wi-Fi environment, resolving additional networking issues and improving security and coverage across all of our offices. All our devices are now Wi-Fi only, with reliable and secured access to ensure no unmanaged devices are connected to any network at EPA.

Affinity Blue’s and decisive intervention did more than just restore the EPA’s wireless network. It set firm foundations for long-term stability, providing the EPA with the assurance that their network environment was not only powered by world-class technology, but managed by a safe pair of hands.



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>
> Simon Hayward,
> Managing Director

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