



Connecting Australians to the unique programming and services of SBS

How Ricoh IT Services brought a data centre solution to life for Australia's most diverse broadcaster.

CASE STUDY: SBS AUSTRALIA

An Australian cultural institution

Before we talk about what we did, let's talk about who we did it for.

SBS is a modern, multiplatform media organisation with a free-to-air TV portfolio spanning five distinctive channels in SBS, NITV, SBS VICELAND, SBS Food and SBS World Movies; an extensive radio network providing 68 communities with services in their own language; and an innovative digital offering, including SBS On Demand, available to audiences anytime and anywhere.

As Australia's most diverse broadcaster, SBS holds a unique place in the Australian media landscape, inspiring all Australians to explore, respect and celebrate our diverse world.

A trusted IT services provider

SBS and Ricoh have partnered for more than 15 years on operational

and strategic technology projects. Together, we've built systems and networks that connect everyday Australians to SBS's unique programming and services. And we've managed and monitored the network environment 24 hours a day, seven days a week, since 2011.

An immovable deadline

On paper, the goal was clear: relocate all the technical equipment at SBS's Melbourne office into one level. But in practice, the project would be a complex dance of construction, collaboration and cool heads.

Technology moves fast in the media landscape and it's essential that IP Network infrastructure continues to be effective.

"They needed an IT Services team they knew had the experience to get it across the line."

Alex McCarthy, Ricoh IT Services Senior Client Manager

The project required an evolved

data centre solution. And it needed to happen fast, behind the scenes, without disrupting the broadcasting schedule.

The network rebuild using customised infrastructure would rely on relationships, like Ricoh's long-term Gold Partnership with Cisco.


"We rely on Ricoh, we rely on their relationship with Cisco, and we rely on the decades of experience they bring."

Darren Farnham, SBS Head Of Technology, Operations and Services

With more than 50 per cent of SBS radio content across five radio stations produced in the Melbourne office, it was crucial that network changes happen seamlessly outside of broadcast hours.

"If we didn't get it right, our live broadcasts wouldn't go to air affecting our highly engaged audiences."

Darren Farnham, SBS



"We've built something fit for purpose – a network, a design and infrastructure that works for our live broadcasting with resiliency at its core." Darren Farnham, SBS Head Of Technology, Operations and Services

“We’ve built a relationship where, we have an honesty and a team that challenges each other in design then pulls together to deliver great outcomes.” Darren Farnham, SBS Head Of Technology, Operations and Services

Making it happen

Key technical challenges of the project included risks of network disruption due to legacy infrastructure and an industry transition to digital data streaming with audiences demanding an innovative digital transformation approach.

An already challenging technical task was made difficult by on-site restrictions: because of SBS live broadcasting, all IT project work was scheduled between 11pm and 4am. This demanded exacting scheduling and a commitment to transparency and communication.

“A live broadcasting client raises the stakes. You have to double down on keeping communication open.”
Alex McCarthy, Ricoh

Let’s do it, better than anyone else

Ricoh worked to ensure the project reflected organisational, staff and stakeholder changes.

“We collaborated on daily stand ups. If something popped up from a change the night before, we were able to rollback or remediate in hours. In a traditional project, that might have taken days.”

Jodi Higgins Ricoh Senior Project Manager

The co-design approach identified network consolidation for the SBS Melbourne site as a priority, as part of a wider national refresh to ensure systems continued to be effective and efficient.

We designed a Data Centre solution based on Cisco Nexus 9K architecture.

This approach provides a 100Gbps core network & connectivity speeds for endpoint devices of up to 10Gbps, with built-in capacity for scalability and growth.

The solution design also incorporated redundant Cisco Firepower security appliances, Cisco Catalyst switches & Cisco wireless to provide:

- multi-functional zone security
- high-speed next generation access switches
- endpoint connectivity through wireless 802.11ac Wave 2 access points
- control and visibility through management consoles
- an advanced postural endpoint security solution.

As the walls of the data centre were built around them, Ricoh and SBS planned to deploy the solution in a spine and leaf topology to create a high-speed, highly available and redundant network.

“We’ve built something fit for purpose – a network, a design and infrastructure that works for our live broadcasting with resiliency at its core.”

Darren Farnham, SBS

Better than ever

After a significant number of network changes and updates and working closely with the SBS team, Ricoh ITS co-designed and deployed a solution providing a robust backbone to support SBS as it continues to enhance its digital systems and capabilities.

“Working with Ricoh was simply first

class. The work we did together, the collaboration and what they delivered for us in almost impossible circumstances – it’s as good as I’ve seen in my time in the industry.”

Darren Farnham, SBS

On the ground

Engineers worked in a five-hour production change window from 11pm-4am, making 33 night changes over seven weeks.

The SBS and Ricoh teams collaborated under challenging circumstances to build a future-focused network. The project refreshed the longstanding relationship, with a renewed sense of trust, respect and shared accountability for great work.

“We all had skin in the game – if you asked who owns this project, everyone stuck up their hand. Re-engaging meant we could deliver beyond all expectations in a condensed timeline.”

Alex McCarthy, Ricoh

What’s next?

The next step in the partnership is a new greenfield network for the SBS headquarters in Artarmon, Sydney. Managing 99% of SBS television broadcasts, the next Data Centre solution will be up to four times larger than the Melbourne solution.

Ricoh is proud to power intelligent broadcasting into the future.

“We’ve built a relationship where, we have an honesty and a team that challenges each other in design then pulls together to deliver great outcomes.”

Darren Farnham, SBS

Ready for digital transformation in your business?

The first step is finding the right workplace technology partner to design a customised solution that works for your business. Contact us today hello@ricoh.com.au