

NeuRA builds its digital foundation for the next decade of brain research

NeuRA needed technology to keep pace with its ambitions. By partnering with Nexon to run its IT end-to-end, the institute gained security, scale and expertise it could never have afforded to build alone. The handover was completed in three months with no disruption to clinical trials.



Big ambitions, stretched foundations

Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) is an independent not-for-profit medical research institute tackling the brain health challenges that shape our lives.

For more than 30 years, it has worked to prevent, treat and cure disorders of the brain and nervous system, with researchers studying dementia, Parkinson's, motor neurone disease, chronic pain and mental health across more than 120 active projects.

Based in Sydney's Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct, the institute is home to one of only two major brain banks in the country, partners with the AFL on concussion research and runs treatment trials with patients.

Funded by grants and philanthropy in an environment where only about 8% of grant applications succeed, NeuRA feels every dollar. Overheads compete directly with research for the same limited pool.

"My job is to keep the wheels turning smoothly so our 400 researchers can get on with their work as effectively as possible," says Andrew Finch, NeuRA's Chief Operating Officer.

As the institute grew, that got harder. The in-house IT team was supporting everything from live clinical trials to the Brain Bank and was stretched thin, with cybersecurity demands adding to the load.

"While our small team did well with what they had, the substantive challenge

was whether it was capable of carrying us into the next five to ten years with the tremendous growth in data and AI analytics, especially in medical science and research," says Finch.

Choosing a partner who understood the mission

After a considered selection process, NeuRA chose Nexon Asia Pacific (Nexon) for its Microsoft expertise and its depth in the not-for-profit sector, including a track record with organisations such as Children's Cancer Institute, Cerebral Palsy Alliance and Lifeline.

"Nexon came recommended to us by colleagues at other not-for-profits and medical research institutes. They give us a scale we could never reach on our own, the latest and greatest from the big technology vendors, and the cost benefits too," says Finch.

"NeuRA needed more than a supplier. They needed a team that would take the whole problem off their plate and understand why it mattered. Every hour a researcher spends wrestling with technology is an hour their research misses out on," says Jarrod O'Hara, who leads the partnership at Nexon.

Changing everything, disrupting nothing

Nexon became NeuRA's IT department, working to a three-year strategic plan built in collaboration with the institute's leadership. It moved NeuRA onto a single



At a glance

Industry

Medical research, Not-for-profit

Challenges

- Outgrowing in-house IT capabilities
- Securing sensitive patient data
- Ageing on-premises servers
- Patchwork of ad-hoc tools
- Maintaining live clinical trials

Solutions

- End-to-end managed IT services with on-site support
- Microsoft 365 platform consolidation
- Microsoft Azure cloud migration
- Microsoft Defender XDR, Entra ID P2, Sentinel, managed SOC
- Three-year strategic roadmap

Outcomes

- Handover completed in three months
- 168 applications, 50 research platforms
- 1,000 service desk requests resolved
- No disruption to clinical trials or research
- Enterprise-grade security

Microsoft 365 platform, migrated ageing on-premises servers to Microsoft Azure, secured sensitive research and patient data and put support on site so help was always close by.



Several NeuRA teams run live clinical trials that reach into patient care through apps such as CogDrisk and CogCoach. "Our researchers can't have their important work interrupted by tech issues. If a data bank goes offline for even ten minutes, the whole trial can be in peril," says Finch.

Nexon's experienced change managers worked alongside NeuRA's teams throughout, helping the institute, as Finch puts it, look around corners so it stayed ahead at each step.

The IT handover was completed within three months. Nexon now manages 168 applications and services for the institute, including 50 specialist research platforms spanning MRI and imaging data, scientific facilities and critical equipment monitoring, and its service desk has closed more than 1,000 requests. Not one clinical trial was interrupted, and all 400 researchers kept working.

"A breath of fresh air"

Standardising on Microsoft has made the biggest day-to-day difference. A scatter of ad-hoc tools has given way to a single platform where everyone works and collaborates.

"Moving to a complete Microsoft 365 platform has been very smooth, and it surprised people with how much easier their work became," says Finch.

NeuRA's research environment and sensitive data are protected by an integrated Microsoft security platform, supported by Nexon's managed security services and 24/7 monitoring.

A Nexon engineer works on site at the institute. "Working with Nexon has been a breath of fresh air. Having people on site who know us, backed by a team we can rely on, has made all the difference," says Finch.



I can now speak with confidence about where we're heading. The leadership team has far greater visibility of how our IT works, and we know the path forward is more resilient, stable and secure.

Andrew Finch

Chief Operating Officer, NeuRA

Keeping pace with the world's best

Nexon is preparing NeuRA's people for AI, starting with an executive seminar led by Nexon CTO Mike Woods on where Microsoft Copilot and AI can take medical research. Azure Virtual Desktop and Microsoft Intune will follow as part of the cloud migration, giving researchers secure access on their own devices wherever they work.

NeuRA's researchers already work alongside the best in the world, contributing to global studies such as the Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer Network. The aim is for them to stay in step with their international peers and, in time, to lead them.

Beyond technology, the partnership reflects a shared commitment to

advancing research that improves lives for generations. Nexon's team is looking forward to getting behind NeuRA's fundraising gala, the first of many shared moments the two organisations expect over the years ahead.

About Nexon Asia Pacific

Nexon is an award-winning digital consulting and managed services partner for mid-market, enterprise and government organisations across Australia. We offer clients a uniquely broad suite of solutions requiring end-to-end capabilities coupled with specialist expertise in security, cloud and digital solutions. As a certified and accredited local and state government provider, CREST and ISO-certified, Nexon partners with world-class technology vendors to deliver innovative and integrated solutions.



Support NeuRA's research

Your support helps NeuRA discover solutions to brain and nervous system disorders and make an impact for generations.

Discover how you can help at

<https://neura.edu.au/get-involved/donate>

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