



Nova creates new 30 day repair programme for 3GIS network

3GIS is a joint venture operated by Vodafone Hutchison Australia (VHA) and Telstra (for its 3G 2100 mobile customers) which operates and maintains the shared 2100MHz network. When a partner was needed quickly, who could reliably take on the repair of this equipment (including Harris Lucent microwave radio equipment), Telstra Supply Chain on behalf of 3GIS turned to NovaInTec. Within two weeks, through its UK joint venture partner Nova Incepta, NovaInTec found a reliable repair partner and established a process which would allow the first product to be repaired and tested for quality control. Since then the company has taken on and cleared the backlog of units requiring repair, and has now established a regular process for repairing the units each quarter.

With the flexibility of the NovaInTec approach and the 30 business day timeline that they are able to work to, the new repair contract has enabled 3GIS to extend the life of the Harris radio equipment and save substantial costs whilst planning investment in new transmission equipment.

Background

The 3GIS joint venture is a partnership between Telstra and Vodafone Hutchison, and operates jointly owned 3G RAN network infrastructure which provides 3G services via the 2100 Mhz band, to Telstra and 3 mobile customers.

The joint venture company created a shared infrastructure with separate core networks, supported by a mix of leased services and dedicated transmission infrastructure, including Harris Lucent microwave radio equipment, as well as a shared radio access network. This equipment provided a convenient, lower cost alternative for urban networks, as well as a solution to the problem of taking fibre into difficult and more remote terrain at the edge of the network.

The contract for the operation and maintenance of the network on behalf of the joint venture was awarded to Telstra Supply Chain (since Telstra and VHA have now agreed terms to dissolve the joint venture and separate their assets, the NovaInTec contract for the continuance of repairs has now transferred to VHA).

This included the repair of the Harris Lucent MDL microwave equipment, with around 1600 links in the network.

The Challenge

Harris had ceased direct operations in Australia and was no longer repairing the Harris radio units. The sub-contractor appointed to handle the repairs by shipping them to the Harris European repair facility was unable to handle the volume of work within acceptable timescales and therefore faulty units were building up in stock and the number of spare units was reducing. This meant an increasing risk of substantial network outage, if no spare units were available.

TSC was therefore looking for a partner who could not only repair the units to a high standard but could also guarantee a workflow and timescale that was acceptable.

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The benefits are significant:

- Guaranteed turnaround times
- Excellent quality of workmanship with almost no returns
- Competitive pricing
- Good working relationships
- Transparency and flexibility

The Solution

Using a new repair partner in the UK, NovalnTec (a joint venture between Ceratech in Australia and global telecoms engineering consultancy Nova Incepta) was able to create a programme both to handle the backlog of faulty units that had built up and also to create a 30 day repair service for future maintenance.

Peter Grigg, CEO of NovalnTec, explains: “A short-term and a longer term solution was needed to the repair problem. We were able to offer both. I am particularly proud of the fact that we were able to react very quickly, finding a UK partner that was already repairing similar equipment and willing to take on the new units at short notice and provide a long-term service working with us.”

NovalnTec, through its UK partner Nova Incepta, began working with Telmar Network Technology, who were already repairing similar Harris microwave radios and could therefore begin with the repair of the 3GIS models through a New Product Introduction process.

NovalnTec then established a test & repair facility at Telmar’s Solihull UK site. Working examples of the units, product manuals and the LCT software for the repair and test process were quickly shipped to the repair facility. It took just two weeks to begin the repair of the first batch of 89 units, which included the backlog that had built up while a suitable solution was found. NovalnTec was awarded a 2+1 year frame contract to establish the ongoing programme and is handling around 30 units for repair each quarter.

The new arrangements have helped to avoid a potentially business critical situation where the increasing number of faulty units could eventually have left insufficient equipment to operate the system. This would have resulted in the operator having to invest significant sums to replace the radio access network in advance of their planned upgrades.

Renato Petrillo of Telstra comments: “NovalnTec stepped in at just the right moment to help us overcome the build-up of outstanding repairs that would eventually have threatened our network availability. They also provided a long-term solution with excellent commercial and service terms. The 30 business day turnaround means that we can plan more effectively.”

The service provided by NovalnTec and Nova Incepta has also provided peace of mind and full transparency, says Mr. Petrillo. “We have an excellent relationship with NovalnTec. We always know exactly what is happening and the NovalnTec team keeps us informed. If there are any issues, we know about them – but we also know that they are being dealt with.”

Peter Grigg, NovalnTec, says: “This has been a very successful ongoing project in which we have been able to react quickly to help the 3GIS joint venture find a solution to their problem. The Harris Microwave radio equipment is an integral part of the 3GIS network and without support would have cost a lot of money to replace earlier than planned. We worked fast with our partners in the UK and were able to demonstrate a quality of service and flexible approach that allowed us to begin repairing the units within two weeks. The fact that the contract has been continued by VHA as the new network operator speaks volumes for the success of this work.”

Renato Petrillo has the last word: “The NovalnTec solution has really changed the way we are able to operate and plan ahead. The 30 business day turnaround means I know what equipment I have at my disposal and with every unit returned in full working order, we know where we are at all times. NovalnTec have been a pleasure to work with, have delivered on all their promises and kept us fully informed along the way.”