Final Report on a Feasibility Study
for an Information Technology ‘Helpdesk’ Service
for Community Organisations

Prepared for Brisbane City Council

by

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Executive Summary

In Brisbane and across Australia more generally, it is apparent that the use of information technology (IT) is becoming increasingly important to community organisations in their capacity to deliver services effectively (Wood et al: 2001). IT support represents a fundamental component of this. However, the quality and effectiveness of different forms of IT support in these organisations varies greatly. It was anticipated, therefore, that the Feasibility Study would provide some answers to whether a more effective model could be implemented.

A three-stage research study was conducted by Swinburne University of Technology’s Institute for Social Research to investigate the issues. This was designed to provide data on the kinds of IT support that currently exist, and whether a more centralised and community-based alternative could be established and made available to community organisations in Brisbane. It was anticipated that the findings would also assist in assessing the long-term demand and self-sustainability of such a centralised service model.

The first stage of the study was an Internet review investigating the types of IT support services available to community organisations within the not-for-profit context in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, and Britain. A great deal of variance was found between countries. The United States, Canada and Britain have a number of not-for-profit technical support organisations that provide a wide range of affordable IT support services to non-profit organisations. In contrast, the provision of IT support within the not-for-profit context appears to be an area that is least developed in Australia and New Zealand. The larger size of the non-profit sector in the United States, Canada and Britain, and the high level of financial support from corporate and philanthropic partners, appear to explain these differences.

The second and third stages of the study were a telephone survey of 70 community organisations and in-depth interviews with 7 organisations. A small number of survey questions were not answered by all of the 70 respondents, which are indicated by the sample size in each of the following graphs.

Based on review and analysis of the data derived from the telephone survey and in-depth interviews, community organisations in the Brisbane City Council region have the following characteristics.

Small but networked:

Staff levels were relatively modest. 50% had 5 or fewer full-time employees, 55% had 5 or fewer part-time employees, and in some instances these part-timers are actually volunteers. Organisations with 12 or less people made up 70% and 77% respectively (see Figure 1).
The vast majority of community organisations in the region, irrespective of size, are computerised. Modest levels of staffing were also reflected in computer density. 34% of organisations have 5 or fewer computers, 27% have 6-10 computers and 20% have 11-20, i.e. 81% have 20 or fewer computers (see Figure 2).

46% of these computers are 1 to 2 yrs old and 41% are more than 2 years old, but the frequency of upgrading was widely dispersed.

While 81% have 20 or fewer computers, 84% of these are networked and 96% Internet connected (see Figure 3).
Their IT support takes differing forms:

These organisations generally used multiple types of IT support. 29% mainly had a dedicated internal IT team or professional IT staff member. 54% mainly relied on a staff member, volunteer or family member/friend who was not professionally trained but had the most knowledge in IT. Only 14% mainly used a contractor (see Figure 4).

A notable trend in the organisations that mainly relied on a member of staff, who was not professionally trained, was to first turn to that staff member when they had a computer-related problem. If the problem could not be resolved, then a contractor was usually contacted.
The forms of support used were predominantly face-to-face and phone (both at 89%), followed by email and call-outs (both at 50%). The preferred types of support for all problem types were face-to-face and phone support.

54% of community organisations spent $5,000 or less annually on IT support (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5  Annual expenditure on IT support**

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002

65% of organisations used IT support at least once a month, while 30% reported using it less than once a month (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6  Frequency of using IT support (monthly)**

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002
Support within community organisations for an IT Helpdesk

There was strong support for an IT Helpdesk focused on the needs of the community sector. 45 organisations (65%) responded as being ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to use its services. However, most would only be interested if it was free or at minimal cost. Most of the organisations interviewed in-depth responded positively towards the introduction of an IT Helpdesk (see Figure 7).

Figure 7  Likelihood of using an IT Helpdesk

![Bar chart showing likelihood of using IT Helpdesk]

Source:  ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002

16 or 35% of those organisations that expressed an interest would consider a pre-paid annual membership, which included the first three support calls free. Most of the organisations interviewed in-depth responded positively towards an annual membership, although this was dependent mainly on cost (see Figure 8).

14 or 31% of those would use the Helpdesk service if charged at commercial rates. Cross-tabulation of the variables revealed that 13 organisations would be interested whether charged commercial rates or a pre-paid annual membership (see Figure 8).

9 or 20% of those organisations would consider using a remote access support service provided by the IT Helpdesk. Both the survey and in-depth interviews revealed a concern regarding confidentiality and privacy issues, although none of the respondents rejected the concept; resources and education might allay these concerns (see Figure 8).

13 or 29% of those organisations would consider using a technology planning service provided by the IT Helpdesk. Most of the organisations interviewed in-depth would use this type of service (see Figure 8).
Support for an IT Helpdesk is strongest among small community organisations, and those that spend least on IT and IT support.

More than 65% of the organisations that responded as ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to use the services of an IT Helpdesk had less than 25 staff. Of these organisations:

- 28 spend between $0 and $5,000 per year on IT support
- 5 spend between $6,000 and $10,000 per year
- 2 spend between $11,000 and $20,000 per year
- 1 each spend between $21,000 and $40,000, and $41,000 and $60,000
- 4 spend more than $60,000
- 4 respondents did not know how much their organisation spends (see Figure 9).

This suggests that a community sector IT Helpdesk might be commercially feasible.

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002
Figure 9  Annual expenditure on IT support by organisations likely to use a Helpdesk

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002
Introduction

Among community organisations in Brisbane, there is currently no central body that provides comprehensive and affordable information technology (IT) support and advice. These non-profit organisations vary greatly in size and use a variety of methods to support their IT systems and IT needs. The types of support that these organisations utilise range, in broad terms, from professional, in-house dedicated support for larger community organisations, to *ad hoc* support from staff members and/or contracted support from an outside provider, for medium and small organisations.

In Brisbane and across Australia more generally, it is apparent that the use of IT is becoming increasingly important to community organisations in their capacity to deliver services effectively (Wood et al. 2001). IT support represents a fundamental component of this. However, the quality and effectiveness of different forms of IT support in these organisations varies greatly. It was anticipated, therefore, that the Feasibility Study would provide some answers to whether a more effective model could be implemented.

A three-stage research study was conducted by Swinburne University of Technology’s Institute for Social Research to investigate the issues. This was designed to provide data on the kinds of IT support that currently exist, and whether a more centralised and community-based alternative could be established and made available to community organisations in Brisbane. It was anticipated that the findings would also assist in assessing the long-term demand and self-sustainability of such a centralised service model.

The first stage of the project involved conducting an Internet-based literature review to investigate the types of IT support services available to community organisations in comparable countries, i.e. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Britain. The second stage was a telephone survey of a wide range of community organisations in the Brisbane area. Stage three consisted of a series of in-depth interviews with a representative sample of these organisations. The primary objectives were to collect empirical data on the forms of IT support currently used and to obtain opinions on the desirability and viability of introducing a central Helpdesk service which would be available to Brisbane’s community organisations.

In formulating the hypotheses for the study through the literature review, three potential delivery models were proposed; these were evaluated against the collected data to enable a recommendation for the most viable option.

The potential models for IT support delivery for community organisations are:

1. Remain with the current model in which community organisations maintain separate IT support service/s. Here the onus is upon organisations themselves to develop in a competitive marketplace the forms and levels of IT support that they feel best suit their needs and finances.

2. A partnership *between* community organisations. Here larger community organisations with their own in-house professional and dedicated IT support would assist medium and small organisations. This would, over time, establish common
systems between organisations and allow information sharing and resource sharing between those who have common social and cultural goals.

(3) The establishment of a centralised sector-wide Helpdesk specifically designed to meet the needs of community organisations. This would provide comprehensive not-for-profit IT support services, formal training, IT assessments, establish common systems over time, and link with government services such as the Community Jobs Program that would help to employ local jobseekers on IT-related projects.
Method

Research Objectives

For the purpose of the study, a ‘Helpdesk’ is defined as a dedicated team of IT professionals who provide computer-related support. The specific objectives of the research were: (1) to find out the level of computerisation in community organisations in Brisbane; (2) to investigate the type of IT support services currently used and the level of satisfaction with these services; (3) to find out the levels of expenditure on IT support by community organisations; and (4) to ascertain community organisation support for a centralised IT Helpdesk service.

After conducting an extensive Internet-based literature review it was hypothesised that there would be strong levels of support for the implementation of an IT Helpdesk to serve community organisations. More specifically, it was anticipated support would be greatest amongst smaller community organisations, those with low levels of expenditure on IT support, and who rely principally upon non-professional support from staff with a only limited knowledge and limited capacity to manage day-to-day IT support needs.

Research Design

The research strategy chosen for the study is the triangulation approach, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (Minichiello et al. 1990). It is generally accepted that the use of two methods can provide a richer and more varied insight than may be the case when using a single-method approach. Indeed, as Booth (1988) argues, this transdisciplinary approach represents a powerful framework for exploring new territories that have opened up through the IT revolution, where new vocabularies and new processes are producing new social realities.

The first stage of the project was devoted to an Internet-based literature review, investigating the types of computer-related support available to community organisations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Britain (see Appendix A). The information collected in this review helped to underpin the conceptual framework of the project and inform the form and content of the questionnaire.

The second stage was the quantitative component, which consisted of a telephone survey (see Appendix B). The survey was conducted in Brisbane during April 2002, using a sample of 170 community organisations. A high response rate of 41% was achieved, with 70 organisations completing the survey. In order for the questions to be answered adequately, the criteria for selecting respondents stipulated that they have a functional level of computer skills. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. A series of pilot interviews were conducted to test the flexibility of the questionnaire and to ascertain whether the questions were easily answerable and could provide the kind of data that they were intended to elicit. In the ‘live’ survey, most of the questions were understood, with only minor adjustments made to the interview schedule where appropriate.

The third stage involved conducting face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 7 organisations in Brisbane during April 2002 (see Appendix C). This qualitative approach, as noted above, was felt to be particularly suited to the exploratory nature of the project, dealing as it does with the new and emerging social realities that the IT revolution is bringing in its
The approach provided rich and detailed responses that added another dimension to issues surrounding the role and potential of an IT Helpdesk for community organisations. A sample was selected to achieve an appropriate spread of 3 peak community organisations and 4 service providers located in Brisbane City and surrounding suburbs. These organisations were small, with between 2-18 employees, although the largest had up to 50 staff at times due to casual employees. The positions the participants held in the organisation were Executive Director, Manager, Team Leader, Administration Officer and Project Officer. The types of services provided are in the areas of mental health, disability, youth, family support, legal advice and peak organisations that serve as advocates for other organisations.

The response rate to requests for an interview was high, with only 4 refusals. As in the telephone survey, the criteria for selecting respondents stipulated an everyday functional level of computer literacy. Most interviews were held at the community organisations themselves, with one being conducted at a nearby cafe. They typically took between 30 and 45 minutes, with the longest taking approximately one hour. These were recorded using a small audiocassette recorder and an external microphone and were later transcribed. Taping the interviews rather than taking notes helped to establish rapport between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing a more natural conversational style. All participants appeared to be at ease and were open and relaxed about sharing their views and having these recorded.

**Ethical Considerations**

Participants were advised about the general nature of the study and were provided with comprehensive information regarding the procedures, questions and uses of data. Confidentiality was assured and the interview records were stored in a secure location at the Institute for Social Research. The identities of participants were protected using ID numbers during data analysis, and pseudonyms were used in the report.
Interview Schedule

The questions in the telephone survey and in-depth interviews covered the following areas:

Community Organisation
- A brief overview of the organisation
- Size of the organisation
- Establishing the degree of computerisation:
  - How many computers?
  - How many are networked?
  - Connected to Internet?
  - Do they have a web page?

Current IT Support
- Types of computer-related problems
- Type/s of IT support currently used
- Level of satisfaction with current IT support
- Current expenditure on IT support.

Ideal IT Support Service
- Description of ideal IT support service
- How the organisation would benefit from affordable and reliable IT support

IT Helpdesk Concept
- Attitudes to the concept of a centralised IT Helpdesk
- What level of charges would be appropriate/attractive?
- Pre-paid annual membership with first three support calls free?
- Remote access service?
- Need/desirability of a technology plan.
Discussion

Lack of IT Support Within Not-for-Profit Context in Australia

The Internet review investigating the types of IT support services available to community organisations within the not-for-profit context in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada and Britain found a great deal of variance between countries. The United States, Canada and Britain have a number of not-for-profit technical support organisations that provide a wide range of affordable IT support services to non-profit organisations. In contrast, the provision of IT support within the not-for-profit context appears to be an area that is least developed in Australia and New Zealand. The larger size of the non-profit sector in the United States, Canada and Britain, and the high level of financial support from corporate and philanthropic partners, appear to explain these differences.

Community Organisations: Small But Networked

By their very nature, community organisations reflect the diversity of the wider society. And, as concentrations of social and cultural capital, they invariably have differing structures, philosophical outlooks, social agendas and cultural backgrounds. They also range in size. On one hand, some of the organisations surveyed are part of larger national peak bodies. These are relatively well staffed, with full-time and part-time (as well as volunteer) staff, and have a level and density of computerisation and networked systems to reflect their needs and scale. On the other hand, the majority of the organisations surveyed are small, operating within modest budgets and with minimal staff (full-time, part-time or volunteer).

The research showed that generally speaking the greater part of community organisations are comprised of very small entities. For example, in Australia, the definition of a ‘small business’ is one that employs less than 20 people (NOHSC 2002). The survey of community organisations in the Brisbane area revealed that fully 77% are organisations of less than 12 people, comprising a mixture of full-time, part-time and volunteer staff. 55% of these have 5 or fewer part-time and volunteer staff; and 50% have 5 or fewer full-time staff (see Figure 10). Survey questions that were not answered by all 70 respondents are indicated by the sample size in the graphs.
Community Organisations and IT

Many community organisations have strong elements of commonality, such as the need to raise their profile and to deliver dependable quality services to their clients (Wood et al. 2001). IT has been strongly identified as a means to overcome such obstacles. The First National Symposium of the Call to Advance, Community, Technology and the Third Sector (ACTT) held in Brisbane in 2002 reported that community organisation stakeholders in Queensland were agreed that substantial benefits can accrue through access to IT. These are:

- Improved operational efficiency
- Improved service delivery
- The opportunity to generate income
- The creation of an information resource
- The opportunity to raise awareness and to influence/mobilise people (Wood et al. 2001).

Community organisations already reflect this realisation of the benefits of IT and, accordingly, all organisations surveyed are computerised to some degree, with at least one computer being part of their standard business equipment. However, constrained as they are by staff size and expertise, as well being compelled to operate within budgetary limitations, many are unable to fully exploit their IT capacities or project a vision for future IT strategies.
IT density

- 81% of community organisations have 20 or fewer computers (see Figure 11). In more detail, this figure breaks down as:
  - 34% having 5 or fewer computers
  - 27% having between 6 and 10 computers
  - 20% having between 11 and 20 computers.

Figure 11 Number of computers

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002

84% of these computers are networked and 96% Internet connected (see Figure 12).

Figure 12 Number of computers networked and Internet connected

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002
Both in Australia and overseas, the reliance upon computers and computerisation in industry, business and community organisations is increasing rapidly (NOIE 1998; Pew Internet Research 2002). This process has led to what Weiser and Seely Brown (1997: 5) term ‘widespread and ubiquitous computing’. Interconnectivity, or the ability to network within an organisation and for the organisation to connect with external stakeholders, is a fundamental element in this dynamic. This, alongside the stated appreciation of the benefits of IT by community organisations as outlined above, indicates that this will increasingly become a fundamental aspect of doing business, and an indispensable component of community organisations’ work.

The ‘digital divide’ is a significant issue for community organisations which can be tackled effectively through a comprehensive sector-wide approach. Much is being done through private and public sectors initiatives to help overcome this issue for community organisations (NOIE 2000; Peters 2000; Wood et al. 2001: 5-6). As currently structured, however, community organisations in Brisbane enjoy no coherent and comprehensive IT support plan that would help ‘network’ them in a long-term and viable process. As Wood et al. (2001: 5) note, disparate organisations using a ‘diversity of computer systems’ need a sector-wide IT and IT support process that would give commonality to organisations who have, at base, similar aims and goals.

**Uses of IT in community organisations**

Again, reflecting the range in size and diversity across Brisbane’s community organisations, use of IT applications and peripherals varies considerably. In general terms, over 50% use computers for basic administrative tasks such as letter and report writing, accounts keeping, publishing newsletters, grant submissions and for presentations. This group also expanded the functionality of their networked computers through the sending and receiving of email and the use of the Internet for information relevant to their needs.

It emerged through the 7 in-depth interviews that 3 have their own web page and another was in the process of constructing one. One of these organisations has an especially high reliance upon IT for production of in-house literature, publication of information kits and printing hard copies of their website pages. The in-depth research seemed to indicate also that IT would be used to a much fuller capacity if regular and affordable training were available.

It was concluded from the data that the fluid nature of employment in community organisations, especially the high levels of part-time and volunteer participation, might act as an obstacle to the upgrading of IT skills. This may be compounded through lack of time and resources. Indeed, one respondent noted that their staff lacked necessary IT skills because it was perceived that the focus should be upon client service delivery as opposed to training in IT. In other words, training was seen as a cost instead of an investment. However, it was concluded that this attitude may well be changing in line with the more general community organisation attitude that views IT and networking in a much more positive light.

The use of computer peripherals amongst the surveyed organisations was quite strong: 58% use laser printers, 42% use Inkjets, and 86% have at least one scanner.
IT support takes different forms

In respect of the types of IT support used by community organisations, the principal finding from the survey is that most organisations use a variety of options. This would range from an IT-competent (but non-professional) user who is able to fix simple problems; using an outside contractor; using a dedicated, professionally trained in-house team; or utilising the services of a dedicated, professionally trained in-house individual.

Analysis of the data indicated some trends, however (see Figure 13):

- 28% mainly have a dedicated internal IT team or professional IT staff member
- 54% mainly rely on a staff member, volunteer or family member/friend who was not professionally trained but has the most knowledge of IT
- 14 % mainly use a contractor (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 Main types of IT support used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Professional IT</th>
<th>Non-professional IT</th>
<th>IT contractor</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002

The trend was that the first response to a computer-related problem was to turn to a person with the most knowledge of IT. If the problem could not be resolved, then an in-house team or person would be consulted (if the organisation had such support); if not, a contractor would be contacted.

- The forms of IT support used are predominantly face-to-face and phone (both at 89%), followed by email and call-outs (both at 50%). Face-to-face and phone support are also the preferred types of support for all problem types.
- Across all organisations, 65% use IT support either a little or to a moderate extent each month, and 26% use it frequently each month (see Figure 14).
Who spends what on IT support?

54% of community organisations surveyed currently spend $5,000 or less per year on their IT support (see Figure 15).

The telephone survey indicated strongly that the type of IT support preferred was through telephone and face-to-face contact (both at 89%). The in-depth data gave this finding some added richness and complexity. For example, these types of support were preferred because they could be shown in lay terms what the problem was, and how to fix it themselves next.
time. Face-to-face contact from a contracted IT support source tended to get a more mixed response. Some respondents worried about the call-out costs, whilst others thought that ‘a lot of them tend to treat you like an idiot’; others complained about inadequate response time being an important issue, especially where deadlines are concerned. This suggests that a dedicated Helpdesk responsive to the needs of the sector would be well received.

Community organisation support for an IT Helpdesk

In general terms, the research data confirmed much that was hypothesised regarding the levels and forms of support for the IT Helpdesk that would exist within community organisations. Whilst there was good support amongst the respondents for a Helpdesk, most would only be interested if the service were free or charged at minimal cost.

- 45 respondents said that they would be ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to take up such a service should it be economically attractive for them (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Likelihood of using an IT Helpdesk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002

The cost-factor emerged as significant in terms of not only whether community organisations would consider such a service, but also in terms of what form the service might take (see Figure 17). For example:

- 16 would consider an annual membership for a Helpdesk
- 14 would be interested if charged at commercial rates
- 9 would consider using a remote access support service provided by the Helpdesk
- 13 would consider using a technology planning service provided by the Helpdesk to access their current and future IT requirements.
Source: ISR survey of community organisations, April, 2002

The in-depth survey also showed very strong support for the idea of a sector-wide Helpdesk, with 6 out of the 7 interviewed organisations responding positively. Some comments were:

‘We would be happy to use it…I suppose it would depend on whether we continue to use them as to whether we find them reliable or helpful…the bottom line will come down to costs’ (Jasmine: service provider).

‘I think it’s a good idea. We would certainly seriously consider it, provided it’s in our reasonable means [sic]’ (Bruce: service provider).

‘I think that it is a fantastic initiative’ (Kathy: service provider).

Support was strongest among small community organisations and those that spend least on IT and IT support. The in-depth survey involved small organisations, most of which showed strong support. Further to this, more than 65% of the organisations that responded as ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to use the services of an IT Helpdesk were smaller organisations, with less than 25 staff. Of the 45 organisations who responded as ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’:

• 28 spend between $0 and $5,000 per year on IT support
• 5 spend between $6,000 and $10,000 per year
• 2 spend between $11,000 and $20,000 per year
• 1 each spend between $21,000 and $40,000, and $41,000 and $60,000
• 4 spend more than $60,000
• 4 respondents did not know how much their organisation spends (see Figure 18).
Typical reasons for not supporting a community organisation Helpdesk reflected commonsense consideration of the concept that formed part of the initial hypothesis. Larger organisations with dedicated support (i.e. specialised staff, either in teams or as individuals) did not see any real need to change to something else; they often needed immediate, face-to-face support, and specialised in-house staff was considered both affordable and logical in their particular contexts. 11 respondents are in this category. 9 respondents have an outside contractor with which they would prefer to remain. This group noted cost-effectiveness (in line with their own budgetary requirements), loyalty and trust, or receipt of support from equipment suppliers as factors in their decision.

What kind of Helpdesk do community organisations want?

The qualitative data from the in-depth surveys provided a useful source of information on what community organisations would want from a Helpdesk service. Patterns of commonality that emerged from the data are discussed in this section and the full analysis is included in Appendix C. Issues that emerged as common amongst respondents were:

*Use understandable language (4 respondents)*

Staff expressed the wish that the Helpdesk would be staffed by IT professionals who are competent but are also able to communicate in lay terms with them when explaining the nature of their IT problems and how they could be fixed.

*Good response time (3 respondents)*

This was cited as especially important when deadlines are approaching, and organisations wanted to be able to trust their IT support providers based on their stated response time for problem-fixing.
Provide training (2 respondents)
This was thought to be especially important when about to begin using a new IT application or new system.

Competent support (3 respondents)
A good level of Helpdesk competency in all aspects of IT systems appropriate to community organisations’ needs was deemed to be an important function. This ranged from being able to demonstrate good judgement in terms of diverse IT needs; ability to answer questions clearly and sympathetically; and be accessible, patient and treat community organisations with the same level of service and respect that would be given to organisations with ‘million dollar’ IT support budgets.
Conclusions

There is little doubt that most community organisations in the Brisbane area, irrespective of size, see the benefits from the use of IT. Moreover, the use of IT support, through in-house or contracted Helpdesk services, is a fundamental component in making this work optimally.

The majority, however, are limited by size and expenditure constraints to be able to utilise IT to its fullest extent. IT use in any organisation is a recurrent expenditure: on consumables, for example, and on the constant upgrading of both hardware and software. For most small community organisations, staffed as they are by a combination of full-time, part-time and volunteer workers, keeping up with both what they need in terms of IT support, and being able to afford it, is a constant challenge.

Currently, most make do with what they can in terms of their levels of IT support. This ranges from the self-taught volunteer who may be able to resolve minor problems with printers or software applications and may work out why the network is slow or down altogether, to the larger peak body organisation which has a dedicated, professional staff to operate the IT system and its network connections. Most of the organisations surveyed, however, were at the former end of this spectrum.

The IT challenge for all community organisations seems set to be an ongoing one. As noted at the beginning of this discussion, ‘widespread and ubiquitous computing’ (Weiser and Seely Brown 1997: 5) across society is a powerful trend that shows no sign of diminishing (Pages 2001). Businesses, government, educational institutions and individuals in the home are increasingly becoming dependent upon IT-based interconnectivity as the process permeates more and more aspects of daily life. In general terms, this means that community organisations need to utilise IT and IT support as much as possible if they want to remain connected to the realities of mainstream life in the ‘information age’ and to be part of a productive, dynamic and empowered sector.

This brings us back to the question of the digital divide where ‘full participation in economic, political and social life’ is increasingly dependent upon having ready access to adequately supported IT systems (NOIE 2000). The divide exists in the wider community and in the community organisations that emerge out of it. Affordable and dependable access to support for their IT systems is vital for these organisations. It will help them utilise IT to the fullest extent through training, help them with upgrades, and help them in day-to-day IT problems and how to resolve them. This would represent a small but nonetheless essential factor in helping to overcome the digital divide.

In the information age, ‘collaboration, partnerships and information sharing’ need to become key functions for the community organisations (Wood et al. 2001: 8). The present study has shown that it will become increasingly vital for these organisations to enter the information age as equal partners. This can only be achieved, the study argues, through a grassroots approach to IT systems that network, inform, empower and enable. This will help to make organisations proactive in terms of the effectiveness and potentiality of their IT and networking processes.

Based on the Internet review, Australia’s provision of IT support within the not-for-profit context is less developed than in comparable countries, such as the United States, Canada and
Britain. In comparison to Australia, these countries have large non-profit sectors and a high level of financial support from corporate and philanthropic partners.

The results of the telephone survey and in-depth interviews indicate that a dedicated IT Helpdesk designed to meet the needs of community organisations in Brisbane would be well received by the non-profit sector. The data also indicates that, if fees were set at a reasonable level, the introduction of a service of this kind would be potentially commercially feasible, based on the current level of IT support used by many organisations and the heavy reliance on non-professional support.

It was concluded from the data that an affordable, dependable and responsive Helpdesk support resource would help to empower community organisations through training and support services. Moreover, it will help them to become more efficient service providers through making optimal use of available systems, and will assist in facilitating their economic, social and educative opportunities (for both community organisations and their clients). The creation of a centralised, sector-wide Helpdesk service will be a small but indispensable part of the larger project of using IT to empower community organisations more generally.
Recommendations

This report has shown that, both in Australia and overseas, reliance upon computers and computerisation in community and other organisations is increasing rapidly. Moreover, it is now considered a fundamental aspect of conducting business and delivering services efficiently. Community organisations, if they want to continue the delivery of quality services to their clients and members, need to be willing and able to use IT to its fullest capacity.

Most community organisations in the Brisbane area, irrespective of size, recognise the benefits from IT in the work that they do. Access to affordable and dependable IT support is therefore a fundamental component in assisting the smaller and more vulnerable organisations to utilise their computer systems and networking capabilities to their fullest potential.

Critique of the proposed models

Model 1
Using the findings of this research to assess the three service delivery models that were proposed in the Introduction to this report, the option of remaining with the status quo was deemed to be inappropriate. It was concluded that this might reinforce community organisation fragmentation in Brisbane, when the benefits of networking and interconnectivity within the sector are becoming increasingly recognised.

Model 2
The option of an inter-sector partnership between large and small community organisations for the sharing of IT support and resources appeared, on the surface at least, an attractive and viable one. Large organisations would assist smaller ones through ‘donating’ their IT support professionals’ time and expertise to assist in the needs of those unable to obtain appropriate levels of support. In theory, this would help develop the general cohesiveness of the sector, contributing, in time, to common IT systems, information-sharing capabilities within similar organisations and foster a commonality of interest that would contribute towards the key benefits that IT systems can bring to the community organisations.

Reflection on this option in the light of the study, however, raised some issues of concern. First was the danger that a culture of dependency could evolve, where small organisations may lose autonomy in an important new process or service delivery. It was concluded that a fee-paying relationship with an independent provider would avoid the risk of dependency and loss of autonomy in their IT systems. Secondly, and relatedly, it was feared that there could be a conflict of interest between the IT professionals and the service they would provide to the smaller organisations. These professionals could hold their own employers’ interests as paramount, possibly relegating the smaller organisations to a second-class status within the sector. Thirdly, there may also arise issues of quality of service. Again, where the services are ‘donated’ there exists the danger of slowness of response and less reliability in general – dangers that are also obviated through the services of a fee-paying relationship with independent providers.
Model 3

The research data indicated that the third option, an independent Helpdesk service designed specifically for the needs of the majority of community organisations, was the appropriate model. The report therefore recommends this model, and further recommends that it would include the following components:

- A centralised and comprehensive IT Helpdesk support service that provides technical solutions to IT-related problems
- A Helpdesk website
- Promotion of capacity building within the community sector.

IT Helpdesk support service:

The research data indicated that the Helpdesk support service should include:

- A high quality, dependable and timely support service providing technical solutions to IT-related problems.
- Superior customer service that is highly personalised, respectful and supportive, and able to establish a trust relationship with the client.
- Face-to-face and phone support. A remote access service would also be available.
- Formal and informal training and instruction, with the aim of promoting self-sufficiency and confidence in the use of IT. Moreover, formal training would be suitably accredited, allowing successful trainees to build their own, recognised skill base, giving them mobility within the sector and aiding IT skills cross-fertilisation between organisations.
- A free technology audit to assess current and future needs. Many smaller organisations simply ‘don’t know’ what they need. A no-cost technology assessment would allow them to be aware of their current capacities as well as their possible future capacities if part of a sector-wide network of organisations.
- Services including web page design, database design, and Internet provider.
- Standardisation of computer applications and systems.
- A payment plan tailored to the organisations’ size, technical requirements and budgets.
- Optional annual membership that would include lower fees and greater service options.

Helpdesk website

The Helpdesk website would provide:

- Tips and frequently asked questions (FAQs) about IT-related problems
- Information on all facets of training on computer applications, email and the Internet
• Information on obtaining computer hardware and software at low cost
• Links to all community organisations in Brisbane
• Real-time chat room, and a real-time question and answer forum.

**Capacity building within the community sector**

This would be a mid-term objective and will stem from fuller utilisation of IT capacities and support services across community organisations. Realistic objectives include:

• Establishment of a central IT Helpdesk specifically designed to cater for the needs of community organisations and to promote capacity building within the sector. The provision of high quality IT support will improve functioning and raise the profile of smaller organisations in particular.

• The benefits of the Helpdesk’s website providing links to all community organisations in Brisbane will be sector-wide networking, which will further promote capacity building within the sector. Organisations will have efficient and easy access to other organisations, enabling them to network and keep up-to-date with information, issues and events. This facility will improve service delivery, as community organisations will have the ability to provide their clients with information and electronic referrals to other relevant organisations.

• Standardisation of computer applications and uniformity of systems will improve efficiencies when staff members change employment and move across the sector. Organisations will benefit through savings in time and money on training, and new staff members will experience a smoother transition as the learning curve is reduced.

• An element of capacity building within community organisations is the utilisation of the Community Jobs Program to establish the Helpdesk. Staff recruited through this program would be allocated tasks such as conducting technology audits on community organisations and setting up a web page for the Helpdesk. Program clients will be able to receive training, gain suitably accredited qualifications and develop skills that can be used both inside and outside the community sector.

• A comprehensive Helpdesk support service can act as a catalyst to integrate IT as an integral part of the community organisation sector. The advantages stemming from this may encourage other organisations to utilise its services. In turn, this will promote the long-term viability of the service itself, allowing it to grow and become self-supporting. This will reflect back upon the sector and its organisations, promoting independence and self-confidence in the uses of IT.
References


Appendix A: Internet Review

An Internet-based literature review was conducted during March 2002 to investigate the types of IT support services available to non-profit organisations in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada and Britain. The aim was to locate information on Helpdesk and support services available within the not-for-profit context, both within organisational structures and across networks. The review assisted in the development of a definition for the term ‘Helpdesk’ in order to guide the conceptual framework of the project and the design of questionnaires. Most of the information was accessed through the Idealist website, a ‘mammoth directory of the web’s non-profit and volunteering resources’. Some of the costs and other information that was not available on the website were obtained, where possible, through email contact with the organisations that provide these services.

A search of the Internet found a number of not-for-profit technical support organisations that provide a wide range of affordable IT support services to non-profit organisations. However, there was a great deal of variance between countries. The provision of IT support within the not-for-profit context appears to be least developed in Australia and New Zealand.

This review will begin by outlining some of the types of IT support available in each country, and will indicate the fees and payment methods (e.g. contract) for these services where possible. This is followed by a summary of the IT support services, fees and payment methods. A bibliography of the websites is presented at the end of this review.

Australia

The Internet search found very few IT support services available to community organisations within the not-for-profit context in Australia. Some organisations such as GreenNet Australia, VICNET and Infoxchange are Internet providers. These have a Helpdesk to deal with Internet-related issues. Infoxchange also provides other services to the non-profit sector, such as technology planning, database and online information management, a wide curriculum of computer training, and computer recycling. They maintain an electronic directory of non-profit support services, called Service Seeker, which provides access to 80,896 health, welfare and non-profit services.

One organisation that provides IT support to non-profit organisations is Community Information Strategies Australia Inc. (CISA). However, their IT support is only for their own products, such as Infosearch, a web-based database of 1,500 non-profit services, and <www.eventspool.com>, a searchable listing of all local and major events in South Australia. CISA is the peak non-profit information organisation in that state. They have a Helpdesk service provided by 7 staff, who are available to their clients during normal office hours. Some of these staff are IT professionals. There is no charge for phone support. CISA charges between $65 and $130 per hour for service call-outs depending on the type of service provided, although call-outs for minor problems may not incur a fee. They also provide other services such as information management (e.g. database development), web page development, technology consultancy and training.
**New Zealand**

The Internet search found one technology resource available to non-profit groups in New Zealand. The website [www.not-for-profit.org.nz](http://www.not-for-profit.org.nz) provides information and also offers a low cost web design and hosting service. There are no links to other types of technical support services.

Other websites provided information about the *Wellington Regional 2020 Communications Trust*. This was formed from a previous initiative, the 2020 Communications Trust, which was established under the auspices of the Wellington City Council InfoCity Unit. The aim of both projects is to develop ‘smarter communities’ through the use of computer and Internet technology. Several projects were implemented in partnership with the commercial and non-profit sectors, such as Wellington Non-profit Net which offers websites and training for the city’s non-profit groups. Over 300 such groups now use the resource.

**United States**

The Internet search found a number of not-for-profit technical support organisations that specialise in technology solutions for non-profit organisations in the United States. *CompuMentor*, based in San Francisco, is the largest and most successful of these. Since it was established in 1987, CompuMentor has provided more than 23,000 non-profit organisations with IT support using the services of both staff and volunteers. They are able to offer low cost services and products through support from their corporate and philanthropic partners.

CompuMentor uses a combination of approaches. They take a proactive approach to providing IT support. They have a Scheduled Support Service, which is a monthly or bi-monthly 4-hour preventative systems maintenance service and includes solving ongoing computer problems. This service is available to small and medium-sized non-profit organisations and also provides documentation and informal training. They do not provide emergency support contracts.

CompuMentor also utilises skilled technical volunteers by matching them with non-profit organisations for short-term projects. Volunteers are considered appropriate for short-term projects but not a viable option for ongoing support. Another IT support resource that CompuMentor provides is a free website at [www.techsoup.org](http://www.techsoup.org), which contains technology information and advice. They also produce an online newsletter. Their other IT services and products are technology planning, database planning, strategic consulting (providing advice, planning assistance and project management to Executive Directors and senior staff), and low-cost software. CompuMentor does not provide training courses.

The services that CompuMentor mainly offers are on a contract basis, whilst some are available through membership. The fee for matching volunteers is US$175 for short-term projects. The Scheduled Support Service rates range between US$65 and US$120 per hour, calculated on a sliding scale that reflects the organisation’s budget. In some cases, they are able to offer lower rates to individual agencies. Technology plans start at US$2,000, although a limited number of subsidies are available that can lower the cost to US$500.

*NPower NY* is a similar organisation to CompuMentor and recently went into partnership with them. They provide services to non-profit organisations in the New York City area, with
the support of corporate and philanthropic partners. NPower NY offers similar services to those of CompuMentor, but they also have some other projects related to the provision of IT support. Like CompuMentor, NPower NY has a Scheduled Support Service, and a website <TechSoupNY> which is actually a localised version of CompuMentor’s website. Members have access to specific sections of their website. NPower NY also matches volunteers to short-term projects. The other services they offer are technology planning, database and web page design, and (unlike CompuMentor) a wide range of computer-related training.

Another NPower NY initiative is the Technology Service Corps, which provides young adults from low-income communities with pathways to careers in IT within the non-profit sector. They are also involved in a project funded by Microsoft that will provide technical assistance and training to 12 communities over the next 5 years to develop new NPower NY programs. The result will be a close-knit network of independent programs that will share best practices and knowledge, strengthening the delivery of non-profit technology services across the country.

NPower NY operates as a membership organisation, with fees calculated on a sliding scale that reflects the organisation’s budget. Annual membership fees are between US$150 and US$500. Membership provides entitlements to discounts on services and an online newsletter. Services are also available to non-member groups at higher rates. NPower NY also offers a wide range of free services to both members and non-members.

**Media Jumpstart** is another not-for-profit technology resource for New York City non-profit organisations. Since 1999, their 4 full-time staff have provided assistance to over 60 non-profit organisations through services such as technology planning, developing databases, websites and training. Media Jumpstart relies on donations from the corporate sector and individual contributors. One of their projects is the Technology Circuit Rider Program, which is designed to build the capacity of non-profit organisations by making effective use of technology. An experienced ‘circuit rider’ is hired out for three hours per week for 10 weeks to assist in a wide range of technical support. This includes developing technology plans, creating databases, building websites and providing advice in the purchase of competitive hardware and software. The circuit rider will either work on a one-on-one basis or in a group setting with staff in the planning process. There is a strong focus on promoting self-sufficiency in staff through a wide range of training.

Media Jumpstart’s rates are between US$75 and US$90 per hour and are calculated on a sliding scale. The Technology Circuit Rider Program is also charged on a sliding fee scale. For example, a circuit rider can be hired for 10 weeks at three hours per week for US$1,000.

The review also found a number of volunteer matching websites, such as Voluntech, that allow non-profit organisations to connect with technical volunteers for specific IT support issues. For example, an IT problem can be posted on the website for technical volunteers to take on.
Canada

The Internet search found a number of not-for-profit organisations in Canada that provide IT support to non-profit organisations. One of these is CompuCorps Mentoring, which is modelled after CompuMentor. They operate locally with non-profit organisations in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario, and assist others throughout Canada by utilising online technical volunteers. CompuCorps Mentoring relies on donations from the corporate sector, foundations and individual contributors. They do not use paid consultants for a Scheduled Support type service. Technical volunteers assist on a short-term managed project for a few hours a week, either in person or online. Other services include technology planning and low-cost software. CompuCorps are piloting a project to involve a network of computer-skilled people with disabilities, as home-based virtual mentors to help non-profit organisations. Their fees and charges were unavailable.

reBOOT Canada is a not-for-profit charity founded in 1996 that currently provides computer hardware, networking and technical support to non-profit organisations in Ontario and Vancouver, soon extending to Montreal and Newfoundland. reBOOT Canada utilises their IT professional staff, rather than volunteers. They also provide recycled computers. Labour rates are CA$40 per hour, with 50% of the fee supporting the operation of reBOOT Canada.

Britain

WebTrust is a new organisation located in Dundee, Scotland, providing IT services to British charities. Their main service is designing, publishing and supporting web pages. Other services include database development, programming, training and general problem solving. WebTrust uses a combination of their own professional IT staff together with skilled volunteers enlisted on a project-by-project basis. Their website includes an ITips section that contains tips on using various computer applications. Organisations are encouraged to contribute to the site. Samples from their training manual are displayed on their website. WebTrust’s charges are £13.50 per hour. A Community Fund grant allows them to offer some services free, especially in the Dundee area.

Information Technology Support Unit for Voluntary Organisations (ITSUVO) is owned and managed by Farndon House Information Trust. Farndon House has provided advice and practical support for several years to small voluntary organisations that use PCs and ancillary systems. Established in 1998 to provide support to small voluntary organisation, ITSUVO is based in Yorkshire and is sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Some of the services they offer are technology planning, website design, sourcing hardware and software at reduced rates, as well as IT training.

ITSUVO offers three main options for providing IT support. The first option is a general service, where help can be obtained when needed. The second is an annual support contract for the maintenance of equipment and systems supplied and installed by ITSUVO. Under certain circumstances, this can cover equipment and systems supplied by another company, subject to conducting a full on-site audit. This service has a Helpdesk that is available for phone support and advice on weekdays between 10 am and 4 pm. ITSUVO provides practical on-site assistance and follow-on support. The annual support contract provides for the repair or replacement of any PC parts supplied by ITSUVO, with onsite attendance within three working days. A remote access service is available to enable IT staff to access clients’ PCs.
and network from its base office, providing a more efficient service and reducing the time spent on telephone support. As part of the support contract, the remote service is mandatory. The third option for IT support is to pay in advance to obtain discounted service call-outs in the form of ‘service units’. These provide for 6 hours work on site, and can be ‘banked’ for up to 12 months for use when needed.

ITSUVO’s website contains a detailed manual in pdf format at <www.fhit.org/dl/ictdoc.pdf>. This is free to voluntary organisations and contains definitions of computer-related terms, how to solve problems and information about ITSUVO. Unlike most of the websites in this review, ITSUVO provides extensive detail and breakdown of fees for many of their services and products. General service fees range from £75 to £95 for the first hour or two, with subsequent hours being charged at £40. There are also day rates of £180 for 6 hours on-site. Repairing items at ITSUVO’s site reduces these costs significantly. The scale of charges for a system support contract is dependent on the equipment and system that is installed. Service units range from £210 for one unit to £1,500 for 10 units. Technology planning ranges from £125 to £250 depending on the number of workstations. These prices do not include travel costs.

Summary of typical IT support services provided by not-for-profit technical support organisations

- Technical support is provided by professionally trained staff and/or by matching technical volunteers to short-term projects.
- Phone or on-site support services are the most common. Remote access is another type of service used.
- On-site technical support is available in a number of forms, such as a casual as-needs basis; a pre-paid ‘service unit’; a scheduled pre-paid support service to perform proactive and reactive maintenance on a monthly or bi-monthly basis; hiring out a technician for a specific period of weeks; or an annual support contract.
- Support is available during normal office hours.
- A website and/or links to other websites are provided for staff to locate IT-related information, problem-solving tips and other resources.
- There is a wide curriculum of training for staff, ranging from computer applications to solving technical problems with the aim of promoting self-sufficiency.
- There are a variety of services such as technology planning, web page design, database design, programming, and providing advice in the purchase of competitive hardware and software.
- Low cost software and recycled PCs are available.
- Programs provide technical assistance and training to a group of non-profit organisations in order to develop a close-knit network of independent programs so that they can share best practices and knowledge.
- Programs offer young adults from low-income communities free training as network administrators, in preparation for employment by non-profit organisations.
- Programs train people with disabilities to work as home-based virtual mentors.
Summary of fees and payment methods for IT support services provided by not-for-profit technical support organisations

- Services are provided either at low cost or no cost.
- Some offer memberships that provide access to all services at a discounted rate and services that are not available to non-members. Membership fees can work on a sliding scale that reflects the organisation’s annual operating budget.
Bibliography

Community Information Strategies Australia Inc. <http://www.cisa.asn.au>
CompuCorps Mentoring <http://www.compucorps.org>
CompuMentor <http://www.compumentor.org>
GreenNet Australia <http://www.green.net.au>
Idealist <http://www.idealist.org>
Infoxchange <http://www.infoxchange.net.au>
Information Technology Support Unit for Voluntary Organisations: access via Farndon House Information Trust <http://www.fhit.org>
Media Jumpstart <http://www.mediajumpstart.org>
New Zealand Not-for-profit Organisations <http://www.not-for-profit.org.nz>
NPowern Y <http://www.npowerny.org>
reBOOT Canada <http://www.reboot.on.ca>
VICNET <http://www.portal.vicnet.net.au>
Voluntech <http://www.voluntech.org>
WebTrust <http://www.webtrust.org.uk>
Appendix B: Telephone Survey

ISR Community Helpdesk Survey

“Hello/good morning, my name is ………..., I am calling from Infoxchange in Brisbane. Infoxchange are a not-for-profit organisation that provides information technology solutions to community and government organisations. We’re conducting a survey on behalf of the Brisbane City Council about the use of information technology by community organisations. We want to find out how community organisations get help when they have computer-related problems. The survey takes approximately fifteen minutes and the results will be used to improve the IT support provided to community organisations.”

“We’d like to speak to organisations that are currently using information technology. Does your organisation use information technology?”

If no:
“Thank you for your time today, however we need to speak to organisations that use information technology”. CLOSE.

If yes:
“Is there a person in your organisation who could complete the survey? We’re particularly interested in talking with someone who helps staff with computer-related problems or someone who is familiar with the use of personal computers in your organisation”.

If transferred repeat introduction or make an appointment to call back.

Assure the person who has agreed to complete the survey: “The information you provide is strictly confidential, and you are free to discontinue at any time”.

Q1. To begin with, I’d like to ask you about the type of information technology your organisation uses. Do you use personal computers?

Yes ................................................................. Go to Q3 ......................................................... .......................... 1
No ........................................................................ Go to Q2 ......................................................... .......................... 2

Q2. Can I ask why your organisation does not use personal computers?

Record response: .................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................

SISRQ/EL 51/02
“That’s all the questions I have for you today since we need to speak to organisations that have personal computers. Thank you for your time.” CLOSE

Q3. What type of operating system do you use?

Windows operating system .......................................................... .............................. 1
Macintosh operating system ........................................................ .............................. 2
Unix based operating system ....................................................... .............................. 3
Other (specify) ............................................................................. .............................. 4
Don’t know .................................................................................. .............................. 5

Q4. How many personal computers (including laptops) does your organisation have?

1-5 ................................................................................................ .............................. 1
6-10 .............................................................................................. .............................. 2
11-20 ............................................................................................ .............................. 3
21-50 ............................................................................................ .............................. 4
50+ ............................................................................................... .............................. 5
Don’t know .................................................................................. .............................. 6

Q5. On average, how old are the computers in your organisation?

Less than a year ............................................................................ .............................. 1
Between one and two years .......................................................... .............................. 2
More than two years ..................................................................... .............................. 3
Don’t know .................................................................................. .............................. 4

Q6. On average, how often are the computers in your organisation replaced?

Every 12 months .......................................................................... .............................. 1
Every two years ............................................................................ .............................. 2
Every three years .......................................................................... .............................. 3
Every four years ........................................................................... .............................. 4
Every five years or more .............................................................. .............................. 5
Don’t know .................................................................................. .............................. 6

Q7. Are some or all of the computers networked?

Yes .................................................................................. Go to Q8 ................................ 1
No......................................................................................... Go to Q9 .................. 2
Don’t know .................................................................................. Go to Q9 .................. 3
Q8. How many servers does your organisation have?

0 (peer network, no servers) ................................................................. 1
1-5 ..................................................................................................... 2
6-10 ............................................................................................... 3
11-20 ............................................................................................ 4
21-50 ............................................................................................ 5
50+ ............................................................................................... 6
Don’t know .................................................................................. 7

Q9. Are some or all of the computers connected to the Internet?

Yes ............................................................................................... 1
No ................................................................................................. 2
Don’t know .................................................................................. 3

Q10. Does your organisation have a web page?

Yes ............................................................................................... 1
No ................................................................................................. 2
Don’t know .................................................................................. 3

Q11. What types of applications are used on the personal computers?

11a Word processing (e.g. Word) ...................................................... 1
11b Databases (e.g. Access) ............................................................ 2
11c Spread sheet (e.g. Excel) ........................................................... 3
11d Presentations (e.g. MS PowerPoint) .......................................... 4
11e Accounting (e.g. MYOB, Quicken) ............................................ 5
11f Bibliographic software (e.g. End note, Lotus notes) .................. 6
11g Email ..................................................................................... 7
11h Anti-virus software ................................................................. 8
11i Publishing (e.g. Publisher, Front page) ....................................... 9
11j Project Management (e.g. Project) .......................................... 10
11k Other (Specify) ................................................................... 11
11l Don’t know .......................................................................... 12
Q12. What type of tasks are the computers used for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12a Email</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12b Internet</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12c Letters and correspondence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12d Reports</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12e Accounting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12f Publishing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12g Presentations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h Graphics</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12i Project management</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12j Public access for the local community and/or clients</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12k Other (specify)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12l Don’t know</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q13. How many printers do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q14. What types of printers are they?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inkjet</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q15. How many scanners do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q16. When someone in your organisation has a computer-related problem that they cannot fix themselves, whom do they mainly turn to for assistance? (SINGLE RESPONSE)

Your company’s dedicated team of IT professionals (Helpdesk) .............. Go to Q18 .............. 1
Your company’s dedicated professional IT employee ......................... Go to Q18 .............. 2
Your company’s employee with the most IT knowledge ....................... Go to Q18 .............. 3
Our volunteer/s who helps with IT ........................................ Go to Q18 .............. 4
A regular or occasional contractor from an IT company ....................... Go to Q18 .............. 5
Friend, family or other non-IT staff member ................................. Go to Q18 .............. 6
Never have problems ................................................................... Go to Q17 .............. 7
Other (please specify) ................................................................. Go to Q18 .............. 8
Don’t know ............................................................................... Go to Q18 .............. 9

Q17. That’s the end of the survey. Thank you for your help in answering these questions. If you would like further information about the survey I can give you the contact details (See details at end of survey). CLOSE

Q18. Can you tell me which of the following types of IT problems your staff have had to get help with in the last 12 months and what type of service was used?

(Read out list of ‘types of IT problems’ from table and types of services and tick the appropriate column/s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of IT problems</th>
<th>Internal Helpdesk/s</th>
<th>Dedicated professional IT employee</th>
<th>Employee with the most IT knowledge</th>
<th>Volunteer/s</th>
<th>Regular contractor/s from an IT company</th>
<th>Occasional contractor/s from an IT company</th>
<th>Friend, family, non-IT staff member/s</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18a Hardware (e.g. Hard drive or monitor on a PC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18b Software (e.g. applications such as Word and Excel)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18c Printers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18d Scanners</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18e Computer network</td>
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<td>18f Internet</td>
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<td>18g Email</td>
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<tr>
<td>18h Web page</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18i Other (please specify)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q19. Now I’d like to ask you about types of computer-related support. Which of the following ways have been used to help staff with computer-related problems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of support</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19a Face-to-face service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19b Phone support</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19c Email support</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19d Real-time chat</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19e Discussion boards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19f Call-outs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19g Video conferencing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19h Viewing a remote users screen</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19i Remote control of user’s computer</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19j Other (specify)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19k Don’t know</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q20. When staff have computer-related problems, which types of support do they prefer to receive?

(Tick ‘Preferred’ column OR if they are more detailed about specific types of IT problems for different types of support tick appropriate columns INSTEAD of ‘Preferred’ column).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of IT problems</th>
<th>Face-to-face service</th>
<th>Phone support</th>
<th>Email support</th>
<th>Real-time chat</th>
<th>Discussion boards</th>
<th>Call-outs</th>
<th>Video conferencing</th>
<th>Viewing a remote users screen</th>
<th>Remote control of user’s computer</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20a Preferred

20b Hardware (e.g. hard drive or monitor on a PC)

20c Software (e.g. programs such as word and excel)

20d Printers

20e Scanners

20f Computer network

20g Internet

20h Email

20i Web page

20j Other (specify)

20k Don’t know
Q21. When an IT-support person cannot fix a computer-related problem over the phone, what do you do?

Leave the problem.................................................................1
IT support person goes to the problem.................................2
Call someone in..................................................................3
Other ...............................................................................4
Don’t know ........................................................................5

Q22. How often would a typical staff member in your organisation have needed computer-related support over the last 12 months?

Frequently (4 or more times a month) ...................................1
A moderate amount (one to three times a month) ...............2
A little (less than once a month) ..........................................3
None ..............................................................................4
Don’t know .......................................................................5

Q23. Approximately how many full-time and part-time employees work at your organisation?

23a Full-time........................................................................1
23b Part-time......................................................................2
23c Don’t know .................................................................3

Q24. How much would your organisation spend each year on computer-related support? Please include the salaries of any IT staff members.

0-5,000 .............................................................................1
6,000-10,000 ....................................................................2
11,000-20,000 .................................................................3
21,000-40,000 ..................................................................4
41,000-60,000 ..................................................................5
60,000+ ..........................................................................6
Don’t know .......................................................................7
Q25. As I mentioned previously, we’re conducting this research on behalf of the Brisbane City Council. The council are interested in assessing the viability of a local company establishing and running an IT Helpdesk to serve community organisations in Brisbane. If there were an IT Helpdesk available to community organisations, do you think that your organisation would use it on a regular basis?

Very likely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q28 ............ 1
Likely ................................................................. ............................ Go to Q28 ............ 2
Unlikely .............................................................. ............................ Go to Q26 ............ 3
Very unlikely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q26 ............ 4
Don’t know .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q28 ............ 5

Record any comments

.............................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................

Q26. Why do you think that your organisation would be unlikely/very unlikely to use this type of IT Helpdesk?

Record response

.............................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................

Q27. That’s the end of the survey. Thank you for your help in answering these questions. If you would like further information about the survey I can give you the contact details (See details at end of survey). CLOSE.

Q28. If community organisations were charged at commercial rates to use an IT Helpdesk, do you think that your organisation would use this service?

Very likely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q30 ............ 1
Likely ................................................................. ............................ Go to Q30 ............ 2
Unlikely .............................................................. ............................ Go to Q29 ............ 3
Very unlikely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q29 ............ 4
Don’t know .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q30 ............ 5

Q29. That’s the end of the survey. Thank you for your help in answering these questions. If you would like further information about the survey I can give you the contact details (See details at end of survey). CLOSE.
Q30. If this service were a pre-paid annual contract to provide computer-related support, which included the first three support calls free of charge, do you think that your organisation would use this type of service?

Very likely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q32 ........... 1
Likely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q32 ........... 2
Unlikely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q31 ........... 3
Very unlikely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q31 ........... 4
Don’t know .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q32 ........... 5

Q31. That’s the end of the survey. Thank you for your help in answering these questions. If you would like further information about the survey I can give you the contact details (See details at end of survey). CLOSE.

Q32. If a service were available that helped to assess your organisation’s current and future technology needs, do you think that your organisation would use this type of service?

Very likely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q34 ........... 1
Likely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q34 ........... 2
Unlikely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q33 ........... 3
Very unlikely .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q33 ........... 4
Don’t know .......................................................... ............................ Go to Q34 ........... 5

Q33. That’s the end of the survey. Thank you for your help in answering these questions. If you would like further information about the survey I can give you the contact details (See details at end of survey). CLOSE.

Only ask question 34 if the organisation has a computer network:

Q34. Some companies that provide computer-related support to other organisations are able to provide more efficient and cost effective support when they have permission to gain access to their client’s computer network without having to travel to their client’s organisation. If an IT Helpdesk for community organisations was to have a binding privacy agreement in place and was able to provide significant cost savings to your organisation for computer-related support, do you think that your organisation would use this service?

Very likely .......................................................... ............................ 1
Likely .......................................................... ............................ 2
Unlikely .......................................................... ............................ 3
Very unlikely .......................................................... ............................ 4
Don’t know .......................................................... ............................ 5

That’s the end of the survey. Thank you for your help in answering these questions. If you would like further information about the survey I can give you the contact details.
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Appendix C: Analysis of In-Depth Interviews

Organisation

7 in-depth interviews were conducted: 3 with peak organisations, 4 with service providers. 3 males and 4 females were interviewed. The positions the respondents held in the organisation were Executive Director, Manager, Team Leader, Administration Officer and Project Officer.

Q: What type of service does your organisation provide to the community?

The types of services these organisations provide are in the areas of mental health, disability, youth, family support, and legal advice, and peak organisations that serve as advocates for other organisations.

Q: How many staff does your organisation have?

The number of staff ranged between 2 and 18, although the organisation with 18 staff sometimes had up to 50 when casual staff were included. In detail, the number of staff was 2 (plus 12 voluntary council members), 3 (plus staff on contracts), 4, 12, 13, 15, and 18. Some of these include voluntary staff; in fact, the organisation with 13 staff were all volunteers, including the Manager.

Computerisation

The respondents’ level of knowledge about IT varied from average to above average, with only one having had professional training in IT. 2 of the respondents were the staff members with the most knowledge in IT.

Q: To what extent does your organisation rely on computers?

The level of computerisation varied from using IT for administrative tasks only, to a high reliance on IT where a website was maintained and information material such as newsletters and brochures was produced. Most had a medium to high reliance on IT.

Q: Are some or all of the computers networked?

5 organisations were networked.

Q: Are some or all of the computers connected to the Internet?

6 organisations were connected to the Internet.

Q: Does your organisation have a web page?

3 organisations had a web page, and another was in the process of developing one.
IT support

*Q: What type of IT support does your organisation use?*

3 organisations used an IT company, 3 relied on a staff member with the most IT knowledge in conjunction with an IT company, and one used a government-run Helpdesk. The main types of support were telephone and face-to-face. The organisation that used a Helpdesk had access to different types of support to the other organisations, which were telephone, email and memo support, but interestingly did not receive face-to-face support.

*Q: How satisfied are you with your current IT support service?*

Most respondents were satisfied with their current IT support. In detail, 2 were very satisfied, 3 were fairly satisfied, while 2 were very dissatisfied. The reasons for being satisfied were:

- Personalised service
- Can trust them
- Good rapport
- Good judgement
- Good response time
- Obliging
- Efficient
- Helpful
- Reasonable rates
- Accessible over the phone
- Can fix problem over the phone
- Feel comfortable phoning them
- They explain what they are doing and what might have caused the problem
- Don’t treat you like an idiot
- Help staff members to be self-sufficient by providing training
- Do what they are asked.

The reasons for *not* being satisfied were:

- Slow response time
- Inefficient: taking longer to do a job than they said it would
- No follow-up
- Not finishing the job (e.g. not checking things thoroughly so have to come back), which wastes the time of staff
- Not returning calls, having to chase them up, and then they make excuses
- Not phoning to let staff know that they are unable to get there at the time that was arranged
- Lack of trust, e.g. using remote access without permission
- Abrupt attitude if you speak up for your rights
- Patronising attitude
- Lack of training and instruction / not helping staff become self-sufficient
- Lack of standardisation in applications, email and Internet providers across departments (this was only an issue for respondent with government Helpdesk)
- Written instructions on products too complex
- Inadequate or non-existent technical planning put restrictions on the organisation and ended up costing more money.
 Costs of current IT support

*Q: Are the costs you pay for IT support manageable?*

5 respondents stated that they were paying reasonable rates for their current support. The respondent with the government Helpdesk was paying $160 per quarter, which included $40 for Internet, which was considered reasonable. 3 did not know what they paid but stated that it was probably quite reasonable. One respondent that was paying $60 was not happy, but this appeared to be more due to the situation of having recently bought a new computer that wasn’t working properly from the start and having to pay $60 for call-outs. One respondent was paying $65 through a company that offers lower prices to community organisations. One respondent that was paying around $100 per call-out was not charged for phone support, which suited them. They avoided call-outs as much as possible by utilising their staff member with the most IT knowledge.

*Q: What type of arrangement do you have with your IT support? Do you have a contract with them?*

Only 2 respondents had a contract with their current IT support. One respondent had a contract with the government Helpdesk, and another had a contract which allowed them to pay a certain amount up-front until the money ran out and then they would pay more money into it. 3 respondents used their IT companies on a casual basis, while 2 were unsure about whether they had a contract.

 Ideal IT support

*Q: How would you describe your ideal IT support service?*

When asked about their ideal type of IT support, the answers were different, although some similar patterns emerged. These are marked in bold with a number that corresponds to the comments below.

**Respondent no. 1: Frank**

A central body like BCC is proposing
One Internet provider for all of their council members
Call an 1800 number to get help
IT support locates the best price for purchasing computer equipment

**Respondent no. 2: Caroline**

Have a qualified IT person on site
Someone who is very accessible
1. Answers questions clearly
2. Good response time (especially important when you have a deadline)
3. Good judgement
Respondent no. 3: Gary

1. Use understandable language
4. Provide training on product (could include providing instructions in writing) and provide initial help when new system installed
   Prefer phone support
   Affordable

Respondent no. 4: Jasmine

1. Use understandable language
2. Good response time
3. Ability to do job
4. Assist with requests for training of individuals or groups on various things, such as applications
   Have time and patience to talk you through a problem
   Treat the organisation the same as those with million dollar IT budgets
   Reliability
   To be able to answer questions

Respondent no. 5: Denise

1. Use understandable language
   Ability to answer questions from most simple to complex
   Friendly, rather than demeaning

Respondent no. 6: Kathy

No answer

Respondent no. 7: Bruce

2. A quick response rate
3. Competent

An interesting finding was that, when asked to describe their ideal IT support, only one respondent mentioned cost. The focus was entirely on types and level of service.

1. The most frequently mentioned response (by 4 respondents) was for the support person to use understandable, layman language when explaining things to them.
2. 3 respondents highlighted the importance of a quick response rate.
3. 3 respondents mentioned competence type issues, such as good judgement and the ability to do the job.
4. 2 respondents stated a desire for training to be provided by the IT support.

Benefits of affordable and reliable IT support

Q: In what ways do you think your organisation would benefit from affordable and reliable support?

The benefits that the respondents saw through having affordable and reliable IT support were:
- Increased efficiency
- Benefit research activities
- Prevent staff member with the most IT knowledge from having work interrupted significantly
- Through training, staff would utilise computer system a lot more
- If IT support has a website linking all community organisations, service to clients would improve through greater access to referral information.

**Reaction to BCC IT Helpdesk concept**

*Q: What is your opinion about the Brisbane City Council’s proposal for a local company to establish and maintain an IT Helpdesk to serve community organisations in Brisbane?*

6 respondents had a positive reaction to the concept, although for 4 this was dependent on cost or a combination of cost and service:

‘We would be happy to use it…I suppose it would depend on whether we continue to use them as to whether we find them reliable or helpful…the bottom line will come down to costs’ (Jasmine: service provider).

‘Would that be a fee for service?…All of these government organisations run on the smell of an oily rag…If the council are looking at community organisations, one thing that we’ve got in common is that none of them have got any money….Obviously if the council’s doing it, they’re doing it as a community service, so…for me, it would have to be low cost or no cost…or no one’s going to be interested…They won’t want to know you’ (Denise: peak).

‘I think it’s a good idea…We would certainly seriously consider it, provided it’s [with]in our reasonable means’ (Bruce: service provider).

‘I think that is a fantastic initiative’ (Kathy: service provider).

However, one of the respondents who had a positive attitude about the concept would only use it in conjunction with their current IT support because of their high level of satisfaction with the IT company they use:

‘I think we would be interested to sort of augment what perhaps we get with our current service provider. For instance, if we couldn’t get in contact with him for some reason and we were desperate…yeah, we could use that. I think…we’d probably have to look at where we were at the time and cost and all those sorts of things as well. But I suppose presently we are happy with what we’re getting’ (Caroline: peak).

The respondent who had a negative attitude towards the concept stated that he was sceptical about the Helpdesk’s long-term viability:
‘It sounds good on paper, if I can put it that way. Like a lot of these things that they organise – I’m not saying Brisbane City Council, but other groups organise – they’re great to start with and then people seem to lose interest in helping people. I’ve watched that happen with a lot of groups. They set up great ideas and get them underway, and because they’re not working 100% the way they want them to, they seem to just peter out’ (Gary: service provider).

**Annual membership including the first three support calls free**

*Q: What is your opinion about this Helpdesk having a pre-paid annual membership, which included the first three support calls free of charge?*

6 respondents reflected a positive attitude towards the idea of an annual membership, although cost was usually raised as an issue:

‘Sounds great, but how much are they [support calls] going to be later on?’ (Gary: service provider).

‘I think it’s a good idea…I think an annual subscription would work well’ (Kathy: service provider).

One respondent asked whether the support calls would be in relation to equipment failure or the provision of information. The annual membership made her think of similar types of services that are available, which provide information but are not IT-related:

‘QCOSS – we pay them for an annual subscription and we can use their website for information about any papers…a whole range of issues around social welfare…so there’s already a kind of precedent for this sort of thing. It depends a lot on cost’ (Kathy: service provider).

The same respondent suggested that the annual membership might be based on how many support calls the organisation would be likely to use. However, she was not able to give an answer on how this could actually be achieved.

One respondent stated that they would compare their current IT support with the Helpdesk in terms of cost and service:

‘That sounds good…You’d probably compare that with what you’ve already got…It’s like anything, isn’t it, you’d be saying “Well, how much are we paying now?” If they’re offering something again cheaper but just as equal service…you’d say “Yes”, you’d take it. If it was all equal – equal money, equal service, I mean, six of one, half a dozen of the other – you’d probably stick…with the one you know’ (Denise: peak).

The respondent who was only interested in augmenting the Helpdesk with the current IT support stated that she would also compare them:

‘Depends…I suppose if they were providing an equivalent service to what we currently get through a private business…I imagine it would be a matter
of looking at what they both provide, how accessible and available it is, what the costs were comparatively...those types of things and we’d sort of decide, well, do we want to go with one or the other’ (Caroline: peak).

One respondent was positive about membership:

‘I think it would be a good idea…I would not have any qualms about that’,

but not about the 3 free support calls:

‘I personally would not do that. I would not cheapen myself by saying, “I’ll give you the first calls free...service free. By doing that, you are selling yourself cheap…I know it’s a marketing ploy...but people who advertise that way, it’s because they haven’t got enough business. You do not want to portray that, you want to portray that we are in a business, this is what we give you, that’s it. And after that they sign up...it’s okay...this is a bonus because you’ve signed up. Not as an incentive...You’re cheapening yourself saying “I’ll give you three calls free”’ (Frank: peak).

Only one respondent was negative towards the idea of membership, because the Helpdesk would be an unknown company.

Jasmine: ‘Would you get to try them before you buy?’
Q: ‘Is that an issue?’
Jasmine: ‘Well...I don’t pay for memberships unless I’ve heard what they’re like. I mean, I joined RACQ because I’ve heard that they’re good but if I don’t know what I’m dealing with...Again it comes to cost...If it’s $20 or $30, you think, what have I got to lose?’
Q: ‘What would be reasonable?’
Jasmine: ‘We’re a community group, we’ve got no money [laughs].’

Jasmine went on to say:

‘It would have to be a reduced rate...I suppose then it comes down to how much the reduced rate’s going to be, compared to the going rate.’

She also needed clarity on the definition of a support call. Her opinion was that these would need to be call-outs, not just phone support:

‘You’d have to be careful with the first three because the first three could be just a simple, “Oh, the screen’s frozen.”’

Jasmine brought her work colleague into the conversation, who said that they did not really know how much IT support they would need each year. It would be better to have a more casual arrangement, since they do not have a great need for IT support. He stated that $50 an hour would be a reasonable rate to charge.
Remote access

Q: What is your opinion about the Helpdesk offering a type of service, which enabled them to remotely access your computer system and fix problems from their office, thereby providing significant cost savings to your organisation?

3 respondents had a positive attitude towards the Helpdesk providing a remote access service. The others were highly concerned about confidentiality and privacy issues, but none of them would completely rule this out as an option.

Technology plan

Q: What is your opinion about the Helpdesk offering a technology planning service where a consultant comes to your organisation and assesses your current and future technology needs?

5 respondents were positive about using a technology plan service provided by the Helpdesk. Only one mentioned cost. One of the respondents who were negative about the service saw no need for it because their organisation’s reliance on IT was low. The other respondent primarily wanted to keep using her current IT support, which already provides this type of service.

Services that the proposed Helpdesk could provide

Most respondents spontaneously mentioned a service they would like the Helpdesk to provide in addition to fixing computer-related problems. Denise summed up the general theme when she said that it could be a service that would ‘show them where to get help’. The main emphasis was on training, where there appears to be a great need:

- Face-to-face service / personalised service / form a relationship
- Internet provider (preferably cable)
- Provide list on Helpdesk website of most competitively priced computer equipment companies
- Provide list of best and cheapest training courses available, and whether it would suit their organisation
- Call an 1800 number to get help
- Provide training
- Produce newsletter
- Provide tips on Helpdesk website, such as how to use email for first-time users, and how to conduct research on the Internet
- Phone support for the simplest query, such as how to perform a task in Microsoft Word
- Assist in developing a website for organisations
- Links to all community organisations in Brisbane.
Glossary

**Digital Divide:** The divide between those with access to new technologies and those without.

**Qualitative:** Research method that relies on data that does not lend itself to precise measurement, such as conversations from in-depth interviews.

**Quantitative:** Research method that relies on the collection of numerical and quantifiable data that can be precisely measured.

**Helpdesk:** A dedicated team of IT professionals that provides computer-related support.

**Information Technology:** The study or use of systems (esp. computers, telecommunications etc.) for storing, retrieving and sending information.

**Third Sector:** Represents the fields of philanthropy, civil society and the non-profit sector.

**Triangulation:** The use of different types of measures or data collection techniques in order to examine the same variable.