

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND OLDER TASMANIANS

Australia continues to embrace the digital age and the opportunities it has created, but many older Australians who have not grown up with technology are being left behind as services, information and supports are transferred online.

**The ability to access the internet with modern devices and fast-speed broadband is becoming increasingly important.**

It not only provides access to social interaction, information and services, but supports ageing in place, greater life control, reduced expenditure, opportunities for work, free speech and equality. Its importance has been recognised by the United Nations Human Rights Council<sup>1</sup>.

**Older people who are offline suffer greater disadvantage than their online counterparts<sup>2</sup>.**

Digital technologies can improve many aspects of life, including health, employment, learning and literacy, financial security, social participation, cost of living and intergenerational relationships.

Many older Tasmanians struggle to effectively access and use online services, even though digital inclusion could benefit them and the businesses, services and government agencies they use.

Despite the benefits that digital inclusion of older people offers to the whole community,

**Tasmanians aged over 65 years of age have one of the poorest digital literacy scores in Australia<sup>3</sup>.**

Digital technology was one of the main issues raised by older Tasmanians in recent state-wide consultations conducted by COTA, which highlighted that as age increases over 75 years, digital skills, use and confidence decrease<sup>4</sup>.

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1 La Rue, F. (2011) Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, *United Nations Human Rights Council*.

2 Digital Lives of Older Australians (2016) *Australian Communications and Media Authority*. Retrieved from [www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/engage-blogs/engage-blogs/Research-snapshots/Digital-lives-of-older-Australians](http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/engage-blogs/engage-blogs/Research-snapshots/Digital-lives-of-older-Australians) from Roy Morgan Single Source data (2015)

3 Thomas, J., Barraket, J., Wilson, C., Ewing, S., MacDonald, T., Tucker, J. & Rennie, E. (2017) Measuring Australia's digital divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2017, *RMIT University of Melbourne*, for Telstra

4 Active Ageing Plan: Who I am, not how old I am Background document – Part B (2016) COTA Tasmania

## **Older Tasmanians are not the only members of our community that have difficulty using digital technology.**

Tasmanians in all age, income, employment and education groups have much poorer digital literacy than their respective national averages. Tasmanians over the age of 65 years actually scored higher digital inclusion scores than Tasmanians with disabilities and low income, and were not far behind people with low levels of education, who are unemployed and who live in rural areas<sup>5</sup>.

Those most vulnerable in our community are at risk of becoming even more disadvantaged if efforts are not made to ensure they have access to services, information and support through avenues other than online.

## **A Liveable Community ensures that all members of our community are included and empowered.**

Local councils must recognise that while digital technologies create a huge opportunity to share information, there will always be a proportion of our community that will have reduced capacity to access this. There must always be an opportunity for people to access information, services and support by other means.

Any ageing plan or strategy adopted by local councils must take Tasmania's poor digital literacy into consideration during consultation, development and implementation of a Liveable Community action plan. This is the only way to ensure that all members of our community are included and empowered to live the best lives they can.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas, J., Barraket, J., Wilson, C., Ewing, S., MacDonald, T., Tucker, J. & Rennie, E. (2017) Measuring Australia's digital divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2017, RMIT University of Melbourne, for Telstra