



## **2021 Regional Telecommunications Review**

Good Things Foundation Australia Submission  
September 2021



**Good Things**  
Foundation Australia

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## Table of contents

Introduction	3
<b>The Digital Divide in Regional Australia</b>	<b>3</b>
The “Capital-Country Gap”	5
Affordable access and ability	5
Emergency and natural disaster resilience	8
Accessing essential services and healthcare	9
Skills for work	10
<b>Current work</b>	<b>11</b>
Be Connected program	11
Health My Way	12
Regional Tech Hub	13
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>About Good Things Foundation Australia</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<b>15</b>

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## Introduction

Despite some recent improvements in access, people living in regional areas of Australia are still considerably less digitally included than their metro peers.

The COVID-19 lockdown restrictions across Australia and worldwide has changed the way we live and work, and highlighted digital inclusion as an issue for all states and territories, including regional and remote areas. As the world increasingly moves online, some Australians are more at risk of being left behind in their ability to access information, services, contribute to Australia's digital economy, and stay connected to others.

When considering the needs of regional Australia in telecommunications, it is important to focus on the need for people to have the affordable access and ability to find reliable information online, engage in or find work, access essential services including healthcare, as well as connecting with friends and family, community and recovery services in emergencies.

Good Things Foundation Australia believes that building digitally resilient communities will assist in creating more connected communities, and to do this, Governments should increase their work with community organisations and telecommunications service providers on solutions.

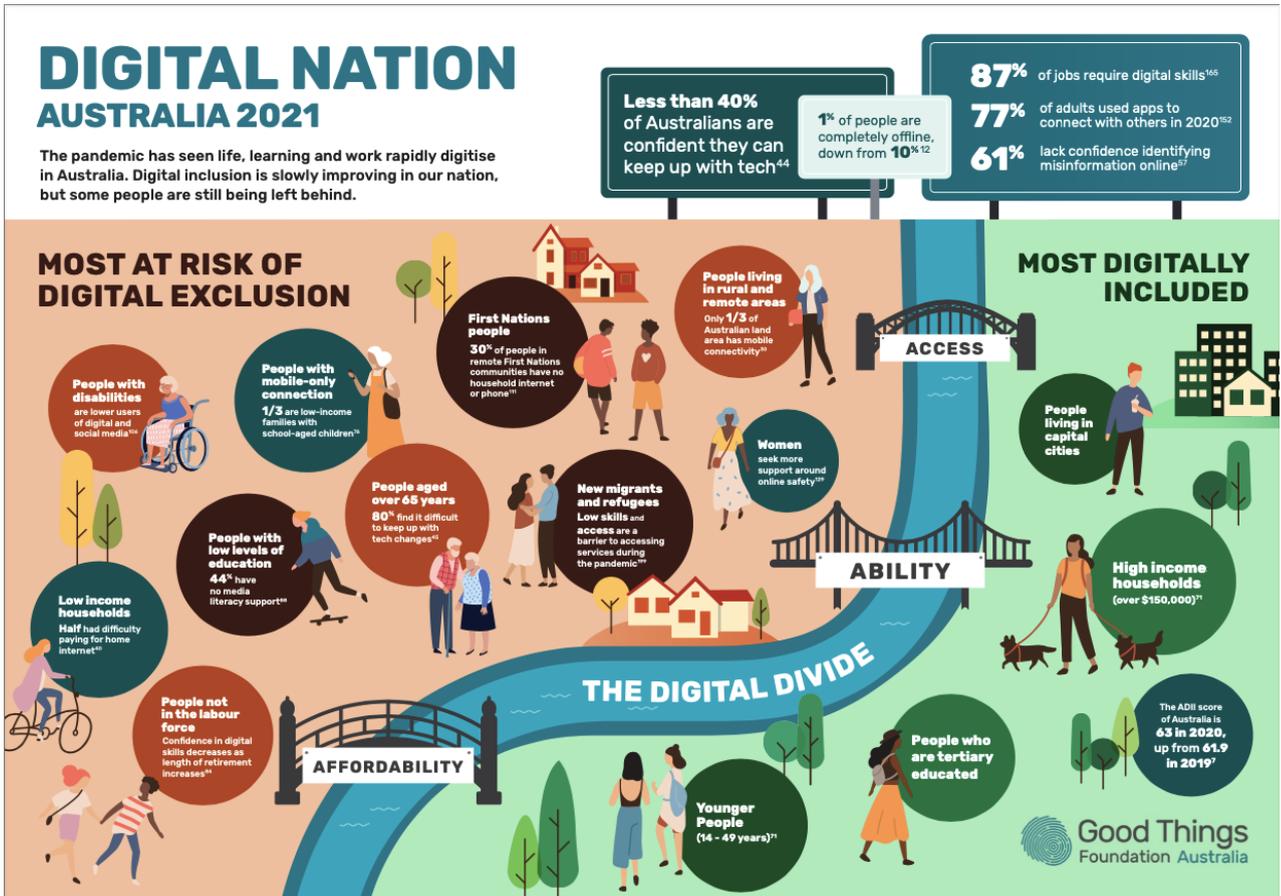
Good Things Foundation Australia thanks the Committee for the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review for the opportunity to make this submission, especially considering the current importance of digital inclusion due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## The Digital Divide in Regional Australia

Across Australia, the digital divide impacts many people and communities. While research indicates that the pandemic has seen the rate of people completely offline fall, still less than 40% of people in Australia feel confident that they can keep up with rapid tech changes.<sup>1</sup> People who are on low incomes, have lower levels of education, have a disability, are older or have a mobile-only connection, First Nations people and people living in regional/rural Australia are particularly at risk of being digitally excluded.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 15



Good Things Foundation’s Digital Nation Australia 2021 infographic showing the key digital inclusion challenges in Australia.

People living in regional Australia face specific challenges in equally participating in the digital world. In the rural and remote Australian landscape, there have been difficulties in internet infrastructure and affordability, as well as digital attitudes and capacity.<sup>2</sup> It is incredibly important for people to have both access and ability in these areas, which are more prone to emergency situations and isolated from essential services.

- [Read about Ken’s journey to digital in rural Queensland](#)
- [Read Digital Nation Australia 2021 report](#)

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, A., Dale, A., Babacan, H. & Dezuanni, M, (2019), *Connectivity and digital inclusion in Far North Queensland’s agricultural communities. A Cairns Institute Policy Focused Report*, James Cook University, Cairns.

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## The “Capital-Country Gap”

Despite some recent improvements in access, people living in regional and rural areas of Australia are still considerably less digitally included than their metro peers.<sup>3</sup> In 2020, the “Capital-Country Gap” was evident across all areas of digital inclusion, with the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) score being 7.6 points lower in rural areas than capital cities.<sup>4</sup> In the 2020 ADII, when ‘Ability’ alone is looked at, incorporating people’s attitudes, skills and activities, the digital divide between metro and regional Australia was 10.2 points. In fact, ‘Ability’ has the widest divide of the three digital inclusion areas of Ability, Access and Affordability for people living in rural areas. This indicates that measures addressing issues of connectivity or affordability alone, although important, will not close the digital divide between city and country in Australia.

There is also a gap in usage, with only 24% of people living in regional Australia being high users of digital media, compared to 38% of their metro peers.<sup>5</sup> When looking specifically at First Nations community members, First Nations peoples are 7.9 points below the national average ADII score for digital inclusion.<sup>6</sup> Currently, an estimated 30% of First Nations people living in remote indigenous communities do not have household access to internet or telephone services, despite improvements in infrastructure.<sup>7</sup>

## Affordable access and ability

Three main factors influence a person’s ability to cross the digital divide and make the most of telecommunications opportunities available: ability, affordability, and access.<sup>8</sup> Often, these factors interplay with each other to influence levels of inclusion. Without an affordable and reliable internet connection, there is reduced access to information, digital services, and communication channels with community, family, individuals, and government.<sup>9</sup> There are also reduced opportunities to develop key skills. Even after

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia’s Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 6, 15

<sup>5</sup> Notley, T Chambers, S Park, S Dezuanni, M (2021) [Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs](#), WSU, QUT and University of Canberra, p. 28

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia’s Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 19

<sup>7</sup> Featherstone, D (2020) [Remote Indigenous Communications Review. Telecommunications Programs and Current Needs for Remote Indigenous Communities](#), ACCAN, p. 7, 9

<sup>8</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia’s Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 5

<sup>9</sup> ABS (2016), *Household Use of Information Technology*, Australia, 2014-15, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/8146.0Main+Features12014-15?OpenDocument> accessed on 11 January 2021

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Australians are connected to and using the internet on an appropriate device, many people still don't feel confident or safe online or feel they can't keep up with the rapid pace of technological change.<sup>10</sup> Higher levels of inclusion in all three areas are required to ensure that people and communities are 100% digitally included.

The nbn roll out across rural Australia has improved access in regional areas, and take up of the nbn has been greater than in urban settings, yet access to a device or the internet is still an issue for many.<sup>11</sup> The affordability gap has recently increased for people living in regional and rural communities compared to their metro peers.<sup>12</sup> Affordability remains the main barrier to digital inclusion for low income families<sup>13</sup> and is a persistent issue for First Nations peoples, being one of the main factors for reduced rates of household internet access in remote indigenous communities.<sup>14</sup>

Broadband coverage alone will not address access barriers in regional Australia. Less than a third of the Australian land mass has mobile coverage,<sup>15</sup> leaving large areas in regional Australia not covered, or covered by only one service provider limiting choice and market competition. While mobile-only users are less digitally included than people with other connections, mobile-only use is a key strategy people implement to overcome connectivity barriers. The coverage issues of mobile networks has the potential to have a significant impact on low income community members in regional Australia, given they are more likely to be reliant on a mobile-only service.<sup>16</sup> Further, a relatively high proportion of First Nations peoples are mobile-only users with prepaid connectivity (35.0% versus the national average of 19.9%), which has a higher cost per unit than fixed internet connections,<sup>17</sup> which may impact the ability to close the digital divide for regional and rural First Nations people.

Barriers in device connectivity became very apparent during the pandemic. Good Things Foundation Australia's digital devices grant run through the Be Connected program provided small grants to community organisations so they could provide loan devices and data to older Australians at risk of isolation. Our research during early

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 15

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 6

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 15

<sup>13</sup> Ogle, G (2017) *Submission on the Productivity Commission Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation Draft Report*, SACSS, Adelaide

<sup>14</sup> Featherstone, D (2020) [Remote Indigenous Communications Review. Telecommunications Programs and Current Needs for Remote Indigenous Communities](#), ACCAN, p. 9

<sup>15</sup> Infrastructure Australia (2019) [An Assessment of Australia's Future Infrastructure Needs. The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019](#), p. 568

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 18

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 19

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lockdowns found that 75% of our national network of community partners reported having learners in their communities without access to devices and data at home. When we retested this in August 2021, 74% of our regional network partners still reported that this was an issue in their community. This indicates that those most at risk of being digitally excluded still require more support to get affordably connected at home.

In addition, as some digital skills training has had to go online due to recent COVID restrictions, lack of access and affordability has impacted people who would like to gain more digital ability. A recent survey showed that 32% of our regional network partners report lack of access to devices and data at home as a significant barrier to delivering digital skills support, increasing the challenge in assisting people in their digital upskilling journey. The survey also showed that 49% of our regional network partners said that their learners not having the digital skills to get online using apps such as Zoom, Facetime, or similar platforms was currently a barrier to them providing digital skills support.

Research by Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia discovered a distinct gap in digital skills for people living in regional areas, particularly around connecting to the internet, due to a range of factors, such as the rapid pace of improvements to digital access in these areas and a lack of tech advisors located in regional areas.<sup>18</sup> School-aged students in regional and remote areas have shown to have significantly lower digital ability than the national average.<sup>19</sup> Further, First Nations peoples are more likely to have lower levels of digital ability with an ADII ability score 7.9 points below the national average.<sup>20</sup> Australians who live in regional areas, alongside people who are less educated, living with a disability, identify as First Nations, or are older are at higher risk of having low media literacy and have a lower likelihood of engaging with a broad range of media channels.<sup>21</sup> Gaps in digital media literacy include not knowing how to change social media privacy settings and a lack of confidence in identifying misinformation online.<sup>22</sup> To this point, the ACCC's 2019 Digital Platforms Inquiry report recommended that a community-based education program is established to develop resources and train community organisations to upskill all Australians in identifying and scrutinising online news, building on the model of the Be Connected program.<sup>23</sup> Regional and rural

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<sup>18</sup> BIRRR (2020) [Consultation on a New Digital Technology Hub](#), p. 2

<sup>19</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority (2018) [NAP sample assessment ICT literacy: Years 6-10](#), p. 25

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), [Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#), RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 6

<sup>21</sup> Notley, T Chambers, S Park, S Dezuanni, M (2021) [Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs](#), WSU, QUT and University of Canberra, p. 10

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> ACCC (2019) [Digital Platforms Inquiry, Final Report](#) p. 33

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Australians need to be able to readily access such digital upskilling programs that are tailored to their specific needs.

- [Read Digital Nation Australia 2021 report](#)
- [Read our case study on loan devices from Grafton, NSW](#)

## Emergency and natural disaster resilience

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific note that advances in technology, such as cloud computing and the Internet of Things, create opportunities for increased resilience and connectivity in disaster prone areas.<sup>24</sup> However, full digital inclusion is a requirement to see the benefits of this increased capability, including being able to distribute enhanced information quickly.<sup>25</sup>

The 2019–2020 bushfire crisis highlighted digital inclusion as an issue for all Australians, and especially those in the affected regional/rural locations. Many were cut off from digital communications channels and up-to-date emergency information in a dangerous and rapidly changing situation. People in these communities need to have the digital skills and confidence to find reliable information online in an emergency and connect with friends, family, community and essential recovery services.

Community organisations often act as emergency meeting points or evacuation centres, and have roles greater than digital skills provision in the recovery and support effort, such as social or health support. Some of these organisations are also the places community members can access digital devices and the internet if they do not have this access at home. If people are cut off from this access due to natural disasters, digital access levels in the community are anticipated to decline from their usual levels.

Numerous organisations we work with have supported their community through natural disasters other than bushfires including floods, cyclones and drought, all of which would impact the needs of their communities for different types of digital support. For example, individuals may need to fill in online forms to access drought relief or government support.

The recent national crises have also increased the risk of misinformation spreading quickly online, which can cause real-world harm and be a barrier for people trying to find accurate and reliable information quickly in an emergency situation. Having essential digital skills gives Australians the ability to find reliable information as well as identify dangerous misinformation regarding a crisis situation.

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<sup>24</sup> United Nations ESCAP (2019) [The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific, Pathways for Resilience, Inclusion and Empowerment, Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019](#), p. 102

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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As natural disasters can impact local digital inclusion service provision, digital readiness support needs to be provided in advance to prepare regional communities, as well as during and following the event, to create digitally resilient regional communities.

- [Watch our case study from bushfire impacted community in Narooma, NSW](#)
- [Read our Bushfire Royal Commission submission](#)

## Accessing essential services and healthcare

The importance of digital access and inclusion in regional and remote areas has been highlighted by the recent movement online of essential services, such as banking, health, government services, work, and education, due to COVID-19. Even before COVID-19 restrictions, people living in geographically remote areas of Australia had decreased access to services.<sup>26</sup> Now with even more services moving online, and the opportunities this brings for the regional economy, it is imperative that everyone is equally digitally included.

Of the many areas highlighted by recent restrictions due to the pandemic, the ability to access digital health has been shown to be extremely important. Digital health covers the full range of health technologies introduced into care, including telehealth, mobile health apps, as well as online health services and tools. Telehealth – patients and medical professionals interacting via a digital device or phone – saw a rapid rise in use, reaching 55.7 million consultations from the beginning of the pandemic to April 2021.<sup>27</sup> During this time, 84% of Australian internet users used telehealth for the first time or increased their usage.<sup>28</sup>

Telehealth brings significant opportunities for increased access to health care services for many people, particularly those living in rural and remote areas. However, a significant barrier remains: how to connect with people who have low or no digital health literacy skills or confidence. In addition, people particularly at-risk of poor digital literacy, including those living in rural and remote areas, are more likely to be in the lowest socioeconomic groups and fare the worst in all health measures, such as higher

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<sup>26</sup> Baxter, J, Hayes, A, Gray, M (2011) [Families in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia](#), Australian Government, Institute of Family Studies, p. 3

<sup>27</sup> Snoswell, C.L., Caffery, L.J., Hobson, G., Taylor, M.L., Haydon, H.M., Thomas, E., Smith, A.C. Centre for Online Health, The University of Queensland. Telehealth and coronavirus: Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) activity in Australia. <https://coh.centre.uq.edu.au/telehealth-and-coronavirus-medicare-benefits-schedule-mbs-activity-australia>. Published May 19, 2020. Accessed July 19, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Australian Communications and Media Authority. (2021, May). [Communications and Media in Australia: How we use the internet](#).

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incidences of chronic health conditions and mental health issues, and higher mortality rates.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond healthcare, there is a strong focus on more government and essential services moving online. However, with rapid digitisation during the COVID-19 pandemic, those in regional and remote areas - making up 30% of the Australian population<sup>30</sup> - risk being further excluded. Very few remote indigenous communities were able to readily access services like MyGov and education or work from home during COVID-19 restrictions due to lower levels of digital inclusion.<sup>31</sup> To that point, equal digital inclusion of First Nations peoples has recently been recognised as essential to Closing the Gap, being identified as one of the 17 national targets to ensure equal access to information and services in the National Closing the Gap Agreement.<sup>32</sup>

With increased digital inclusion comes reduced costs for people in regional and remote areas to access essential services.<sup>33</sup> Investing in closing the digital divide for regional and rural Australians will mean these vital communities will be better able to benefit from the expected growth in the digital economy over the coming years.

## Skills for work

In this digital age, the ability to use technology is essential for life and work. In Australia, 87% of jobs now require digital skills and these are required across low-skilled, middle-skilled and highly-skilled jobs in all sectors.<sup>34</sup> In addition, people who are not in the labour force are more likely to be digitally excluded.<sup>35</sup> The Productivity Commission recently identified that foundational work-ready digital literacy programs need to be delivered through channels like community adult education, in addition to school and VET providers, to reach those who would not engage in formal education.<sup>36</sup> These foundational work-ready digital literacy programs must be made available in community education initiatives tailored to the workplaces and job needs of regional and metro Australia.

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<sup>29</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2020). Australia's health 2020 data insights. (Australia's health series no. 17). AIHW.

<sup>30</sup> ABS (2019) Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2017 (Catalogue Nr. 3218.0) <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3218.0Main+Features12017-18?OpenDocument> accessed on 15 March 2021

<sup>31</sup> Featherstone, D (2020) *Remote Indigenous Communications Review. Telecommunications Programs and Current Needs for Remote Indigenous Communities*. ACCAN, p. 7, 9

<sup>32</sup> Australian Government, Closing the Gap in Partnership (2020), *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*

<sup>33</sup> ACCAN *No Australian Left Offline: affordable broadband for all Australians*

<sup>34</sup> RMIT Online (2021) *Ready, set, upskill: Effective training for the jobs of tomorrow*

<sup>35</sup> Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, (2020), *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020*, RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, for Telstra, p. 5

<sup>36</sup> Australian Government, Productivity Commission (2020) *National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development Review. Productivity Commission Study Report Overview*

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## Current work

Good Things Foundation is an international leader in supporting digital inclusion. Core to our model is a network of hyper-local community organisations alongside high-quality online learning materials. In Australia, we have built and support the Be Connected Network of 3,500 community organisations delivering in-person digital skills programs to people in their community. Organisations located in regional/remote communities make up 54.6% of our network. Our network is diverse and includes community centres, libraries, local Councils, Men's Sheds, aged care and retirement villages, multicultural seniors groups, and disability and employment services. With this diversity and geographic spread, they are well positioned to support regional Australia and close the digital divide.

### Be Connected program

Be Connected is an Australian Government initiative supporting and enabling older Australians to develop digital skills and confidence online. To date, the program has reached 1 million Australians and seen 15,000 people become Digital Mentors, who are able to further support their communities to gain confidence online. This program is a blended learning approach - using digital tools and in-person support to motivate and encourage people to improve their digital capability. The digital mentors delivering the support and the community organisations in the network are trusted members of the community, and a big reason as to why this program approach works.

An evaluation of the program showed a positive social return on investment, with \$4.01 created for every \$1 invested.<sup>37</sup> The evaluation also showed the program increased social connection and community participation, found to be extremely important for those in regional/remote communities.<sup>38</sup>

- [Read the Be Connected Evaluation](#)
- [Watch our case study of drought impacted program at Digital IQ](#)
- [Watch our case study of WorkWays in Charters Towers](#)
- [Watch our case study of Ravenshoe Community Centre](#)

With social distancing measures in place over the past 18 months, many of our network, including libraries, community centres, social groups, and men's sheds, were unable to provide face-to-face support. This led to an increased risk of older Australians

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<sup>37</sup> McCosker, A, Tucker, J, Critchley, C, Hiruy, K, Walshe, J, Suchowerska, R, Barraket, J. (2020) [Improving the digital inclusion of older Australians: The social impact of Be Connected](#). Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, p. 9

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 37

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becoming socially isolated. Our dedicated partners found ways to maintain connections with people in their communities by transitioning their delivery of face-to-face workshops to online programs. In a recent survey, two-thirds of our regionally-based network partners were providing digital skills support in August 2021, through face-to-face, telephone and online means, despite COVID restrictions and widespread lockdowns returning. The primary method through which they were delivering did change depending on the state in which the network partner was based, likely reflecting the different levels of COVID restrictions in place at the time across the country.

Helping people with limited digital skills to learn digital via digital is hard. It takes patience, a lot more time, and a clear focus and understanding about the real difference that this can make to people's skills and more importantly, their wellbeing. It also sometimes takes offline activity, like phone calls and printed tipsheets delivered with added hygiene measures.

However, these efforts have shown that no matter the distance or restrictions, it is possible to provide digital support to those we often view as too hard to reach. Though learning face-to-face is more ideal, if we are going to increase digital inclusion in our country long term and reach people during times of crisis, this approach needs to continue. Lessons from delivering digital skills programs when mentors and learners could not meet in person and now ready to be applied to long term digital inclusion initiatives co-designed and specific to the needs of regional Australians.

- [Read Central Coast Community College's approach to remote delivery](#)
- [Read Reinventing Digital Literacy Support in a Crisis report](#)

However, we know it is not just older Australians who are struggling to be digitally included. In addition to learners aged over 50, 68% of regional Network Partners reported in a recent survey that there were people aged 18-50 years in their community who are asking for support with access to devices, data and digital skills. This compares to metro based network partners of whom only 51% identified this need. More community digital inclusion programs are needed, especially in regional locations, to help those still struggling with digital skills and access to not get left behind in our digital world. Be Connected is a program with the scope to benefit more Australians, including people living in regional areas, to gain essential digital skills if expanded to include adults aged under 50.

## Health My Way

Health My Way is another successful digital literacy program managed by Good Things Foundation Australia. This smaller program worked alongside 75 Network Partners, with

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over 30 located in regional/remote communities. Nationally, we trained 232 digital mentors to support over 3,000 learners develop basic digital health skills. This program was open to Australians over the age of 18, and 79% of participating organisations noted that the program increased participants' access to digital health literacy support, and 92% said the program increased participants' social interactions and connections.

- [Read more about the social impact of Health My Way](#)
- [Read more about our regional approach to digital health education](#)

## Regional Tech Hub

In addition to the programs that Good Things Foundation Australia manages, the need for increased and specialised digital inclusion support for people living in regional areas of Australia has recently been recognised with the introduction of the Regional Tech Hub. This Australian Government funded program targeting regional Australia being delivered by the National Farmers Federation in collaboration with ACCAN is a welcome addition.

However, this program does not provide in person support in communities, which has been shown to be so effective in closing the digital divide. In our experience, a blended learning approach of high quality, reliable online learning content and local places to access face-to-face support from friendly and trusted mentors is critical to assisting people to improve their digital capability. Expanding on this program to deliver this community-led tailored support that meets the telecommunications upskilling and access needs of regional Australia would create the opportunity to see its impact increase.

- [Read our submission to Digital Tech Hub consultation](#)

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## Recommendations

Improving digital inclusion will help people living in rural and remote areas to access information and services, contribute to Australia's digital economy, and stay connected to others, through these challenging and changing times and beyond.

To support all Australians in rural and remote areas become digitally resilient for the future, Good Things Foundation Australia recommends:

1. **Provide funding and support for community education programs in regional Australia that covers adults of all ages**, to ensure all Australians have the essential digital skills to be work-ready for the new economy, can adopt telehealth and digital health initiatives, and can stay connected to communities.
2. **Establish digital media literacy programs targeting adults with low digital capability to reduce online harms and prepare for emergencies.** Locally delivered but nationally coordinated community education programs are needed to support adults in regional Australia to safely navigate the online world, find reliable information (particularly in a crisis) and understand how to report harms and keep their families safe online.
3. **Develop a coordinated approach across Government.** A national digital skills framework is needed to better assist people struggling to effectively make use of telecommunications services. A national digital inclusion strategy is needed for states to work together to improve the lives of their regional communities.
4. **Everyone in regional Australia needs affordable access to the internet.** Implement the recommendations of organisations such as ACCAN to support low income households to better afford an internet connection.
5. **Co-design with First Nations leaders and communities a culturally appropriate and specific digital inclusion strategy.** The government's national Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan needs to be co-designed with First Nations communities, including people in regional and remote communities, and funding and support provided to First Nations organisations and leaders to implement the findings.

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## About Good Things Foundation Australia

Good Things Foundation Australia is a social change charity, helping people to improve their lives through digital. We work with partners in thousands of communities across Australia and the UK.

In Australia, we have built and manage the Australian Government funded [Be Connected Network](#) of over 3,500 community partners and deliver a small grants program to support people over 50 to learn essential digital skills. We coordinate the annual digital inclusion campaign [Get Online Week](#), which last year supported 23,500 people to improve their digital skills. With the support of the Australian Digital Health Agency and our network of community organisations, we assisted adults of all ages to improve their digital health literacy through our [Health My Way](#) program.

Good Things Foundation has run digital inclusion projects in the UK for over ten years and worked in Australia since 2017.

Learn more about our work:

- [Good Things Foundation Australia website](#)
- [Information about our projects](#)
- [Our research and publications](#)
- [Our work in the UK](#)

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