3 years of impact in Australia

19/20 Annual Report

Good Things
Foundation Australia

About Good Things Foundation

We believe in a world where everyone benefits from digital.

Good Things Foundation 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.

There are over 2.5 million Australians who are not online[1]. Being digitally excluded means not having the access or ability to connect safely and confidently to the internet in an affordable way.

This is our third year in Australia supporting people to bridge the digital divide and improve their lives.

We create impact by working with partners and engaging people through a national network of over 3,000 community organisations who offer free, community-based digital skills support.

Together with our partners, we create a large-scale platform for social change and help Australians thrive in a digital world.

Ridgehaven Rise Retirement Village, South Australia

[1] 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.

A message from the National Director

This year has been one like none other we have experienced. The bushfire emergency followed by the COVID-19 pandemic has seen us radically shift how we work and learn, how our communities connect and how we relate to the world around us. This year has shown more than ever how important it is for everyone in Australia to be digitally included.

I have been so proud to see the Good Things Foundation team come together -virtually - and continue to work hard to support our Network, build new relationships, develop new training and resources, and deliver over $8 million in grants to support digital literacy programs. I have been inspired by the incredible shift the thousands of community organisations in our Network made to continue supporting the most vulnerable in their communities. Supporting people with low or no digital skills to get online when you can't meet in person is no mean feat, and so many digital mentors across Australia rose to the challenge. You can read some of their stories in this report.

We've been fortunate to have the great support of our Board led by the Chair, Jo Cavanagh, OAM. Jo joined us as Chair in August 2019 and her knowledge and experience has been a huge benefit to us during a challenging year.

COVID-19 has forced us all to think and act differently and learn from each other as we adapt to a new normal. Collaborating with colleagues working in digital inclusion across the country and the world has seen all of us benefit from sharing our knowledge, ideas, research and our challenges. It's only by working together in partnership that we can bridge the digital divide. We will continue to look for opportunities to come together across Australia, virtually or face-to-face, to ensure that digital inclusion and digital literacy are a key part of our country's new normal.

Jess Wilson, National Director
Good Things Foundation Australia

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Our Network

Our Network Partners are a key part of how we make an impact, supporting people in communities to improve their lives through digital.

Brought together and supported by Good Things Foundation Australia, our Network is made up of grassroots organisations all working to tackle digital exclusion by providing people with the skills and confidence they need to access digital technology.
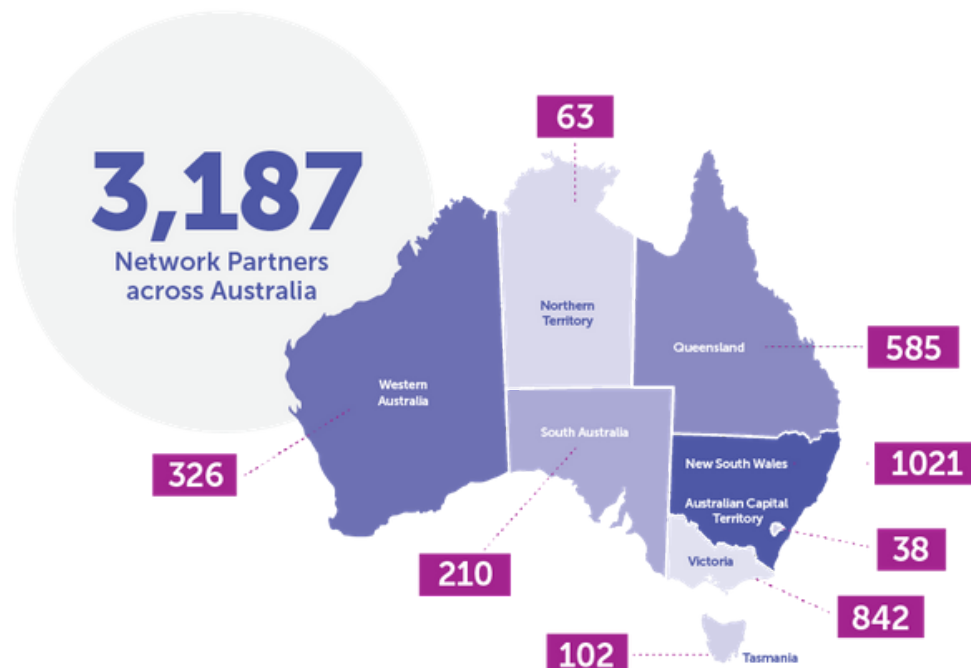
Growing and supporting the Be Connected Network

The Be Connected Network continues to grow, with 663 new organisations joining the Network in 19/20. This has seen our Network increase to 3,187 organisations over just three years.

This year to support the work of this diverse national network of community organisations and build their capacity, we have:

- Hosted 103 training webinars with 2,107 attendees and answered 1,952 helpline calls.
- Produced new resources for Network Partners to deliver quality support for older Australians, with 52,613 resources, guidelines and templates downloaded this year.
- Distributed 35 fortnightly newsletters to the Network with an open-rate of over 44%.
- Received a consistently high satisfaction rate from our Network, averaging at 93% over the year.
- Held Network Partner Meetups in Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney in July/August 2019 with attendees rating the meetups 4.7 out of 5 stars.

This year we also reached the milestone of completing over 100,000 email support conversations during the three years building and managing the Network.

3,187 Network Partners across Australia

63 — Northern Territory
585 — Queensland
1021 — New South Wales
38 — Australian Capital Territory
842 — Victoria
102 — Tasmania
210 — South Australia
326 — Western Australia

Managing a grant program to resource the Network

- Distributed a total of $8,595,875 to 1,184 community organisations across two programs, bringing the total funds distributed over three years to $15,424,190.
- Introduced the new Digital Devices Grant, providing funding to community organisations for loan devices and data for socially isolated or disadvantaged older Australians during the pandemic.
- Introduced a new grant to support community participation in our digital health literacy program

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> The grants are easy to apply for and that is fantastic as it allows us to spend the time on implementing the grant.
>
> – Be Connected grant holder ❞

The grants we manage and distribute help organisations build capacity and deliver digital literacy support on the ground. To ensure our grants management is best practice, in 2020 we conducted an external review of the Be Connected grants program. This review found that Network Partners were highly satisfied with the application process and their understanding of the program requirements. 92% of respondents stated that the process and timescales for application were clear, and a large proportion agreed that our webinars about the grants program supported their application and helped them to decide if it was the right fit for them.

Building digital mentoring skills in organisations across Australia

- Created 4 new digital mentor resources to respond directly to the bushfire crisis and support organisations to upskill their community on using digital in an emergency.
- Built on our digital inclusion community of practice through 75 new Capacity Building projects in the Be Connected program.

In 19/20, we developed a train-the-trainer package for digital mentors, recognising them as critical to the success of grassroots digital inclusion programs. Through the new Capacity Building projects, community organisations started training digital mentors across the country using our new resources.

Supporting older Australians to improve their confidence with digital

Over 170,000 people aged over 50 were directly supported by the Be Connected Network to improve their digital skills and confidence this year. Over three years, the Be Connected program has now engaged more than 750,000 people to improve their digital literacy.

Through learner research over the past three years, we have found that 87% of learners are satisfied or very satisfied with support from their Network Partner. As a result of participating in the Be Connected program, 87% are confident or very confident to search the internet independently (an increase of 12% from baseline).

We continue to deliver the Be Connected program in partnership with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, the Department of Social Services and our Network.

Introducing Health My Way

This past year we started the Health My Way program, supported by the Australian Digital Health Agency. Health My Way is a national digital health literacy program delivered by community organisations in our Network to support people aged over 18 years to gain essential skills and confidence in managing their health and wellbeing online.

We believe that supporting people to learn essential digital health literacy skills is critical to ensuring every Australian has the ability to make informed, confident choices when it comes to supporting their health and wellbeing online. With the onset of the pandemic, we created new, additional resources for digital mentors and learners on finding reliable COVID information online.

Together with our grant-funded community partners, in 19/20 we have:

- Trained 232 Digital Health Mentors
- Created 25 new digital health literacy resources for digital health mentors to use
- Supported 1,127 community members to see the relevance of digital health tools and build their skills and confidence in using them
- Engaged 1,238 people in the topic of digital health literacy through 110 community engagement events

Mr Lan with his tutor Mai

Taking control of online health

Indochinese Elderly Refugees Association | Melbourne Victoria

Mr Lan Ngoc Nguyen was a teacher in Vietnam and migrated to Australia in 2006 to reunite with his children. A lifelong learner, Mr Lan was eager to find a group in Melbourne where he could continue studying and gaining new skills.

"I used to worry about my new life here as I arrived at a very late age of 64 years old and my English was very poor. I was feeling homesick until I joined the Indochinese Elderly Refugees Association. There is a strong sense of community here and now I'm taking English classes and computer classes in my native language of Vietnamese."

Indochinese Elderly Refugees Association (IERA) is running Health My Way to support their community to improve their digital health literacy.

Prior to his Health My Way classes, Mr Lan wasn't aware of the tools available to him. "Before the classes, I had never heard of My Health Record or what it was. And I confess that creating a MyGov account was too complicated for me."

Now, Mr Lan is a strong advocate for taking control of his health online. "I started very slowly, step by step, and thanks to the patience from IERA tutors, I now recognise the importance of My Health Record more and more. I've learned that I don't need to print out my records and I can see everything on the screen of My Health Record right under my fingertips."

Mr Lan is now counting his steps when he's outside for exercise or going to the shops, too. He is looking forward to joining his regular Monday and Wednesday digital skills sessions once social distancing restrictions have eased.

"Once you still have your health and good memory, you should learn something new - especially for the people my age. I wish I knew more about using those health tools before the COVID-19 crisis and isolation so I could have been better equipped with information and advice from health experts. But, it is never too late to learn."

Building awareness of the digital divide

Building support and raising awareness of digital inclusion is a vital part of the work we do. Helping people to better understand the digital divide and the solutions available to close it allows us to reach people at risk of being digitally excluded and help them to find the support they need.

Growing our evidence base

In 2020, we released our second Digital Nation Australia resource, bringing together the latest research and evidence on the Australian digital inclusion landscape.

Also in 2020, we submitted formal responses to the Australian Government's Digital Technology Hub consultation, and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (Bushfire Royal Commission). Both pointed to the strength of community-based tailored support to create digitally resilient communities and close the digital divide.

In October 2019, we hosted the Digital Skills Roundtable with the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman Peter Estlin and the support of the British Consulate. Delegates from across government, corporates and the community sector shared insights from our two countries on initiatives that increase digital skills.

Digital Skills Roundtable, Sydney NSW

Reaching thousands through Get Online Week

In October 2019, we organised our second Get Online Week campaign in Australia, inspiring 900+ community organisations across the country to hold local events aimed at supporting people with no or limited digital skills to get more out of life online. From shopping centre pop-up stalls to morning teas and have-a-go sessions, our Network of community partners held events that reached right into the heart of their community and got people excited about learning new digital skills. We welcomed new partnerships with NBN Co and NAB who both supported our national digital inclusion campaign.

- 900+ events
- 26,000 people engaged
- 98% of event-holders thought Get Online Week was beneficial to their community

Seniors Recreation Council of Western Australia's Get Online Week event

Get more out of life online

Seniors Recreation Council of Western Australia

Seniors Recreation Council of Western Australia held a Get Online Week expo with 79 attendees from their community in Perth. They had 12 exhibitors at the event from local corporate partners and technology providers, alongside their own digital mentors, showcasing virtual reality, robots, digital cameras, assistive technology, the Be Connected Learning Portal and programs such as Google Earth.

Martin Yates, Tech Savvy Seniors Program Manager for the Seniors Recreation Council, finds that some people are resistant to using technology so they kept the focus of their Get Online Week event on making learning digital skills fun, relevant and interesting.

"The main thing that the community gets out of Get Online Week is the enthusiasm or excitement to use technology," Martin said. "We had people who hadn't seen their home in England in 60 years, and they were able to see their old house through Google Earth."

Raising awareness of Be Connected

Throughout the past year, we have been raising awareness of how Be Connected can support older Australians to improve their digital skills to encourage more people to access this essential, free support.

- Facebook ad campaign launched to let loved ones know how their older friends and family can get digital skills support during the pandemic
- 6 major festival events attended (pre-COVID)
- 40+ case studies from the Network shared through social media and newsletters plus 10 video case studies
- 130+ media stories about Be Connected Network Partner's local digital skills programs

Connecting in regional Queensland

Ravenshoe Community Centre

Having basic digital skills can make life that little bit easier when living in a regional community. From buying things online that aren't available in town, to internet banking and accessing services, Ravenshoe Community Centre in Far North Queensland is bringing their community together and teaching them how to improve their lives using technology.

[Click here to watch the video case study.](#)

Ravenshoe Community Centre, Ravenshoe QLD

Responding to COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted us all. What it has shown is how important it is for everyone in Australia to have the digital skills and confidence they need to find reliable information, access services and connect with friends, family and community online.

Our efforts during COVID-19 have focused on responding to the needs of our Network, supporting them to transition to a new way of delivering digital skills programs - remotely.

Introducing a Digital Devices grant

75% of our Network said that their learners lacked digital devices to use at home, limiting their ability to access ongoing support. Through the Be Connected program, we created the Digital Devices grant which saw $1million distributed to our Network so they could provide loan devices and data to in need learners in their community. We also developed a range of downloadable resources to support their loan device programs.

New resources and support offered

To support our Network to adapt to online service delivery, we hosted new virtual skillshares and webinars to collect and share best practice tips. We also created new digital mentoring guides and tip sheets.

242 people attended special skillshares on how to deliver digital skills programs remotely when digital mentors and learners can't meet in person. Resources on delivering digital skills remotely were downloaded over 500 times.

Read more about our response.

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> The response across government, corporate, and community sectors has been fantastic to see. Together we have been able to support people to stay connected during a very difficult time. But if we are going to increase digital inclusion in our country long term, this approach needs to continue.
>
> - Jess Wilson, National Director Good Things Foundation Australia
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York Community Resource Centre staff with new devices

Staying connected with loan devices

York Community Resource Centre, York WA

Like many organisations, the York Community Resource Centre in Western Australia was closed to the public for 8 weeks due to COVID-19 restrictions. The centre is a hub for the York community, and the closure left many community members feeling isolated and disconnected from their friends and family.

Robyn Garratt, Coordinator at York CRC, says, "We had numerous phone calls daily from those vulnerable community members who needed some social outreach. We are the lifeline for a lot of our elderly community members, so at least we are still here at the end of the phone even if we're unable to have them here in person."

After receiving a Be Connected Digital Devices grant to purchase iPads to loan out to isolated members of their community, Robyn says the response from the community has been overwhelming. "Once we announced that we had received the devices, our phones were ringing off the hook for people to start borrowing them. It's such a humbling experience to be able to visit a senior and drop them a device, knowing it will be the key to them sharing moments with loved ones that they were unable to do so for almost two months."

Community members are praising the iPads for keeping in touch with their families overseas.

"I was able to join a zoom party with my family from the UK and see my newest grandchild for the first time. It was such a clear view as well, so I felt like I was sitting right there in the room," says one senior. "If we are online, it means we aren't just sitting around bored or thinking about being old, we can still be a part of the community or a part of our friends and families lives. It also keeps our minds active."

"I have an elderly parent that I have been unable to see in her nursing home, but having the device meant I could chat to her daily," adds another.

There's still more work to do

Digital inclusion is no longer a nice-to-have, but a need-to-have. Digital inclusion must be embedded in policy and service delivery of governments, community services and business to ensure we can truly become a digital economy. We look forward to continuing to work with current and new partners in Government, corporate Australia, and the not-for-profit sector to ensure everyone has the ability and confidence they need to engage safely and confidently with the digital world.

Contact

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