TASMANIAN COUNCIL
OF SOCIAL SERVICE INC.

Understanding Digital Inclusion in Tasmania

Report on Research Findings

TasCOSS
INTEGRITY
COMPASSION
INFLUENCE

The Tasmanian Government undertook to improve digital inclusion in its 2018 IT and Innovation Policy, *Enhancing Tasmania's Digital Capability* through development of a strategy that aims to 'increase the capability and affordability for Tasmanians who are currently experiencing high levels of digital exclusion.'

This report was prepared by TasCOSS and funded by the Department of State Growth to inform understanding of the context, data, solutions and key characteristics of low digital inclusion, as well as the foundation knowledge and entry level capabilities required. We also worked with the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania. As part of this project TasCOSS consulted with Tasmanians in low income households, older Tasmanians and people not in paid employment. We are grateful for their time and input.

TasCOSS

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is the peak body for Tasmania's community service sector.

Our Mission is to challenge and change the systems, behaviours and attitudes that create poverty, inequality and exclusion.

Our Vision is of one Tasmania, free of poverty and inequality where everyone has the same opportunity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Digital inclusion is about ensuring everyone can make full use of digital technologies so they can enjoy the social and economic benefits it provides.

As the first State to be connected to the national broadband network (NBN), Tasmania should be making the most of the opportunities that digital technology brings. And many Tasmanians are. But if you are on a low income, not in paid work, have low levels of education, older or living outside of Hobart, you are more disadvantaged when it comes to participating in the digital world.

It is hard to look for work and fill out government forms when you can't afford to connect the Internet at home, or your only access is through pre-paid plans on your mobile phone. It is difficult to study and keep in touch with friends when you live in a rural area and your Internet speeds are slow and intermittent. It is not easy to learn about the digital world when you are afraid of the technology, you have a disability or you have low literacy skills.

Now that the rollout of the NBN is almost completed, we have an opportunity to shift our focus from the infrastructure to the people that use it. Through the development of a digital inclusion strategy, Tasmania could lead the way in making sure everyone has access to affordable digital technology, and the skills and confidence to use it. By addressing the barriers to digital inclusion, we can unlock the potential of our people and give more Tasmanians the opportunity to participate in our economy and community life.

> **"Participation in the digital world is no longer a luxury, it is an integral part of everyday life. Essential services, including government services, health and education are increasingly moving to a digital-first model."** [1]

All aspects of Australian life now require some interaction with the digital world including managing health care, education, searching and applying for jobs, and banking.

Tasmanians are increasingly required to be able to access and use digital technology for a wide range of essential services across the three tiers of government. These include using forms, finding information and making payments for myGov, My Aged Care and My Health Record as well as Medicare, the Australian Tax Office and the NDIS. Through Service Tasmania, people need to access the online payment portals for all local government accounts such as rates, dog registration and parking fines. They need to navigate information and make payments for State Government services such as vehicle registration, speeding fines, Metro Greencard, fisheries and game licences, school levies, TasTAFE, TasWater, and National Parks passes.

Governments and businesses are moving more of their service delivery and transactions online. Given that people who are on low incomes, not in paid work, and older people are more likely than other population groups to require these services, it is important that measures are put in place to help them do that. This is particularly true for Tasmania where 37.2% of Tasmanians live in areas that fall within the lowest quintile of relative social advantage and disadvantage in Australia.[2]

In preparing this Report, we heard from 369 Tasmanians around the State about their experience with digital inclusion. We heard from people on low incomes, those not in paid work and older people, about the opportunities and challenges in accessing technology and navigating the online world. We heard about managing household budgets so that families could keep access to the Internet, and we heard about the foundation knowledge people have, and what they need to be able to fully participate in the digital world.

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1 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee 2018, *Regional Telecommunications Review — Getting it right out there*, Department of Communications and the Arts, Canberra, p.4.

2 ABS 2071.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia Stories from the Census, 2016, Canberra, 6 November 2018.

In our research we gained a comprehensive understanding of the Tasmanian context through national data on digital accessibility, affordability and ability. According to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) we know that digital inclusion has improved significantly for Tasmanians, but that these improvements have benefited some more than others.

If you are on a low income, are not in work, are older and did not complete secondary school you are more likely to experience digital exclusion than people who are employed, on higher incomes, tertiary educated, and younger. There are significant gaps, and in some cases increasing gaps, between these population groups in Tasmania. People who live outside Hobart are also more likely to be digitally excluded, especially those in Burnie and the west.

Living in rental accommodation is a barrier to accessing digital technologies. National research shows there is a lower proportion of fixed Internet service uptake in rented households due to the cost of installation and the temporary nature of their accommodation. The Tasmanians we interviewed who live in government housing and private rental accommodation were uncertain about who is responsible for getting an Internet connection installed at the property. They are more likely to stay connected through their mobile phones on pre-paid plans as this allows for easier monthly management of budgets, but this choice leads to higher charges than fixed plans. Children in low income households are particularly disadvantaged by lack of access to the Internet at home and the absence of suitable devices on which to do their school work.

Tasmanians in our population target groups have a wide range of digital ability, from those who choose not to participate because they prefer face-to-face contact to those who are adept at the range of activities available through digital technology. They seek help from family and friends, and some access help through Online Access Centres, libraries and Community and Neighbourhood Houses. There is a low level of awareness of the learning programs available and a need to target support to the level of ability, confidence and knowledge of the participants.

This Report is a presentation of the findings of our research and consultations and it includes some solutions that have been identified in the research and suggested by Tasmanians themselves.

With the NBN fixed-line rollout in Tasmania due to be completed soon, there is an opportunity through the development of a digital inclusion strategy to shift the focus from the capital infrastructure to investment in what is required for all Tasmanians to fully participate in the digital world. As the first State due to be fully NBN-connected, Tasmania could also be the first to address the barriers to participation and enable everyone to make the most of the opportunities that the digital world brings.

FINDINGS SUMMARY

Through our consultations and desktop research we identified measures that would benefit Tasmanians who are on a low-income, not in paid work and older people. Some of the suggested solutions that fall within the responsibility of the State Government and could be included in a digital inclusion strategy are:

- Recognising Internet access as an essential service like electricity and water, and as such requiring property owners to provide NBN installation and connection for tenants, in private rental accommodation and government and community housing;
- Focusing the rollout of public Wifi on areas of greatest disadvantage;
- Introducing telecommunications concessions for people on low-incomes;
- Unmetering data for access to government websites to reduce costs to the user;
- Increasing resources for community organisations to run and promote digital learning programs;
- Expanding adult literacy programs through 26TEN; and
- Ensuring those people who will remain offline can still access government services.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF DIGITAL INCLUSION DISADVANTAGE

Tasmania recorded the largest improvement in digital inclusion in 2018, rising 8.0 points to 58.1, according to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII)[3]. This gain is the largest of any state and territory and is thought to be related to the rollout of the NBN given it is largely complete in Tasmania.

Despite these overall improvements, in 2018 Tasmania was ranked as the second-most digitally disadvantaged State after South Australia.

Our position is impacted by the fact that 37.2% of our population lives in areas of social disadvantage.[4]

Geographic areas of digital inclusion disadvantage mirror areas of socio-economic disadvantage in Tasmania. There are 28 towns and suburbs where more than 20% of the dwellings do not have Internet access and all but three of these are in areas of highest socio-economic disadvantage.

There are also disadvantaged cohorts in less disadvantaged parts of the State. Tasmanians in low-income households, those who are not in paid employment, older people and those who did not complete secondary school, experience greater digital disadvantage than other population groups. The gap between Tasmanians who are digitally included and those who are excluded is widening.

According to the ADII there is a digital inclusion gap of 32.9 points between Tasmanians in the highest income bracket (74.2 points) and those in the lowest income bracket (41.3 points). The gap between employed Tasmanians and those not in the labour force increased from 11.7 points in 2014 to 12.3 points in 2018. The gap between tertiary educated Tasmanians and those who did not complete secondary school is 20.5 points, a wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (16.1 points). There is also a gap of 20.5 points between younger Tasmanians (14-24 years) and older Tasmanians (aged 65 and over).

Hobart has made gains greater than the capital city average over the last year with an ADII score of 61.3 in 2018, up 7.3 points since 2014. This reflects a rise in NBN connectivity. But while Hobart has closed the gap with other capital cities, other parts of the State remain behind, especially the north-west. This was borne out in the consultations where people living in regional Tasmania talked about slower speeds, and poor reliability and coverage of their Internet service.

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3 Thomas J, Barraket, J Wilson CK, Cook K, Louie YM & Holcombe-James I, Ewing S, MacDonald T, *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2018*, RMIT University, Melbourne, for Telstra.

4 ABS 2071.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia Stories from the Census, 2016, Canberra, 6 November 2018.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW DIGITAL INCLUSION: ACCESSIBILITY

Not having access to reliable digital technology is a key characteristic of low digital inclusion.

Improvements in access to digital technology are happening across the state due to the rollout of the NBN, but not for all Tasmanians.

Older Tasmanians and those with lower income, employment and education levels tend to have lower levels of digital access. The ADII data indicate there is an income gap in digital access between Tasmanians in low income households and the highest-income quintile of 24.9 points. Employed Tasmanians have greater digital access than those not in the workforce (a gap of 12.7 points), and those who are tertiary educated have greater access than those who did not complete secondary school (21.2 point gap). Tasmanians aged 65 and over experience the lowest digital access of all age groups with an ADII Access score of 57.7 points.

National Salvation Army research shows that 74% of children and young people from Australian low income and disadvantaged households do not have a computer, tablet or iPad at home. Children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds are seven times less likely to have access to the Internet compared to the average Australian child.

Living in rental accommodation is a barrier to accessing digital technology. Nationally there is a lower proportion of fixed Internet service uptake in rented households due to the cost of installation and the temporary nature of their accommodation. In Tasmania, the installation of the NBN connection is the owner's responsibility and the connection itself is the tenant's responsibility.[5]

The people we interviewed who live in government housing and private rental accommodation were uncertain about who is responsible for Internet connections at their rental properties.

Without Internet access at home Tasmanians looking for work find it difficult to fulfil the Commonwealth Government employment services reporting requirements.

Many of the Tasmanians we interviewed use their smart phones to access the Internet and those who had no access used public Online Access Centres and Neighbourhood and Community Houses to get online. Older Tasmanians are more likely to use desktop computers and laptops due to the small size of smart phones.

People with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people find benefits in being online but can experience health and language barriers in navigating websites and online communication.

Some Tasmanians have no desire to be online. They may have security concerns or prefer face-to-face communication, avoiding social isolation by visiting their local service agencies in person.

5 Consumer, Building and Occupational Services, Tasmanian Government, https://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/housing/renting/rental-maintenance-repairs-changes/repairs-obligations

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW DIGITAL INCLUSION: AFFORDABILITY

Not being able to afford access to digital technology is a key characteristic of low digital inclusion.

Based on ADII data, the affordability of digital technology has improved in Tasmania (up 9.1 points to 54.8), but the State is still behind the most-affordable jurisdictions. Hobart is the most affordable (56.9 points) while Launceston and the north-east are the least affordable (49.9 points).

Older Tasmanians and people with lower levels of income, employment and education have lower levels of affordability. The ADII affordability score for Tasmanians on low incomes (28.1 points) is almost half the Tasmanian average (54.8). The 'affordability gap' between employed Tasmanians and those not in the labour force has increased by 1 point in 2016 to 9.4 points in 2018. Digital technology is more affordable for people who are tertiary educated compared to those who did not complete secondary school (a gap of 11.5 points). Older Tasmanians (over 65 years) have the lowest digital affordability of all age cohorts with a score of 38.1 points; that is 16.7 points lower than the state average of 54.8.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), spending on telecommunications is a significant item in the Australian household budget, but it has a proportionally greater impact on low income households[6]. It accounts for more than two-and-a-half times the proportion of household disposable income for the lowest income quintile as for the highest quintile. While telecommunications expenditure has been declining for average income households it has increased for low-income households.

The proportion of households with access to the Internet at home has remained constant over the last few years, but the volume of download and demand for data has increased significantly.

Home Internet connection is considered by some low income Tasmanians to be a luxury that was not required, and by others as an essential service that required sacrifices to be made so the family could be connected.

Mobile phones have become an essential form of communication and connection for many Tasmanians on a low income and looking for work. They are more likely to use pre-paid services and when their credit is close to running out, they may choose to pay additional fees for extra credit or go without digital access until the next month begins.

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, *Household Expenditure Survey*, Cat. no. 6530.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

FOUNDATION KNOWLEDGE & ENTRY LEVEL CAPABILITIES: DIGITAL ABILITY

The knowledge and skill levels of Tasmanians are diverse. There are literacy, health and language barriers but many people can do foundation activities like searching for information, sending emails, paying bills, shopping and applying for jobs.

The digital ability of Tasmanians has improved over the past five years. But the State remains the worst-performing jurisdiction for digital ability with a score of 46.6 points, that is 2.9 points behind the national average (49.5) and 9.3 points behind the best-performing jurisdiction, the ACT (55.9). Hobart is the only region above the state average, recording a score above the national average for the first time (50.7 points).

Tasmanians with lower income, employment and education levels demonstrate a lower level of digital ability than other population groups. The increase in Tasmania's Digital Ability score between 2017 and 2018 of 6.7 points was not matched by low income Tasmanians, whose score increased by only 1.5 points. The digital ability of employed Tasmanians is 15 points higher than people not in the labour force (53.1 points compared to 38.1). There is also an 'education gap' of 28.6 points between the digital ability of tertiary educated Tasmanians and those who did not complete secondary school. The digital ability of older Tasmanians is improving, but those over 65 years have a score of 29.3 that is 17.3 points lower than the state average of 46.6 points.

The TasCOSS survey on digital ability revealed that the knowledge and skill levels of those surveyed is diverse. Most people can search for information (89%) and products and services (84%). Depending on the task, between 18% and 28% of respondents said they did not have the skills to do this online and up to 10% said they can do these tasks with help.

Around half the TasCOSS survey respondents talk to people in games and groups on the Internet, while 62% use and buy music, movies and television shows, and 76% buy from online shops. More are capable of sending and receiving emails (83%), sharing photos (76%) and making changes to photos (72%), and 72% can use video calls like FaceTime and Skype.

Older Tasmanians have a range of knowledge and skill in using digital technology but low confidence is the largest barrier to them learning about digital technology. Most older Tasmanians understand the importance and benefits of being online, especially for keeping up with their children and grandchildren. Most respondents taught themselves to get online (36%), while 30% learned from family or friends and others learned through work, education or formal programs.

Digital programs are available in Tasmanian communities through libraries, Online Access Centres and Neighbourhood and Community Houses, but many older people don't know about them. Only 12.6% of older survey respondents learned how to use a digital device or go online through a formal digital program.

Ensuring that those people who remain offline can be connected to government services, businesses and their community is essential. Having face-to-face options will also benefit those who are online, as many Tasmanians value personal connections.

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BACKGROUND

The Tasmanian Government undertook to improve digital inclusion in its 2018 IT and Innovation Policy, *Enhancing Tasmania's Digital Capability*.

The policy recognises that, '*with almost all State and Federal Government services now delivered digitally, Tasmanians will benefit from increased access to and enhanced capabilities to use these services*'[7]. It also acknowledges that, '*now is the time for action to ensure our fellow Tasmanians are not left behind because they can't access this important tool*'[8].

Through the development of a digital inclusion strategy, the Government aims to '*increase the capability and affordability for Tasmanians who are currently experiencing high levels of digital exclusion.*'[9]

TasCOSS was engaged by the Department of State Growth to conduct consultations and desktop research to inform understanding of the context, data, solutions and key characteristics of digital inclusion, as well as the foundation knowledge and entry level capabilities required. We were asked to consult with Tasmanians in low income households, older Tasmanians and people not in paid employment.

In a TasCOSS submission on the digital economy, we talked about access to digital services increasingly becoming '*as essential for daily life as other services such as electricity and water*'[10]. We recognise that education, work opportunities, government services and social connections are increasingly accessed through digital technologies but there is a digital divide where not all Tasmanians have the same access.

The consideration of the impact of digital disadvantage is particularly important in Tasmania where 37.2% of Tasmanians lived in areas that fell within the lowest quintile of relative social advantage and disadvantage in Australia.[11] It is also important given that around one in two Tasmanians do not have the literacy skills they need for work and life.[12]

TasCOSS's objective in preparing this report is to ensure there is a comprehensive understanding of the key characteristics of digital inclusion and the lived experiences of disadvantaged Tasmanians. It is our hope that the findings presented here will inform the development of the Government's digital inclusion strategy and the implementation of solutions that contribute to increased participation of all Tasmanians in our growing economy.

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7 Tasmanian Liberals 2018, *IT & Innovation Policy*, election policy, Hobart, p.8.

8 Tasmanian Liberals (2018, p.8)

9 Tasmanian Liberals (2018, p.9)

10 Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc 2017, *Submission to the discussion paper on the Digital Economy: opening up the conversation*, TasCOSS, Hobart, p.3.

11 ABS 2071.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia Stories from the Census, 2016, Canberra, 6 November 2018.

12 26TEN 2018, *Home page*, Tasmanian Government, viewed 23 January 2019, < https://26ten.tas.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

During October and November 2018, TasCOSS received feedback from 369 Tasmanians around the State about their experiences of digital inclusion. Through consultations and a survey we communicated with people who are in low-income households, are not in paid work, and older Tasmanians. This total number includes feedback through consultations and a survey aimed particularly at older Tasmanians conducted by the Council on the Ageing (COTA).

The definition of low-income household we use in this report is the bottom two household income quintiles as identified in the ADII.[13] The lowest quintile (Q5) is a household income of under $35,000 per year, and the second lowest (Q4) is $35,000 to $59,999 per year.

The definition of 'not in paid work' is people whose primary source of income is an income support payment. This includes those seeking employment and those not seeking employment, such as retirees and students.

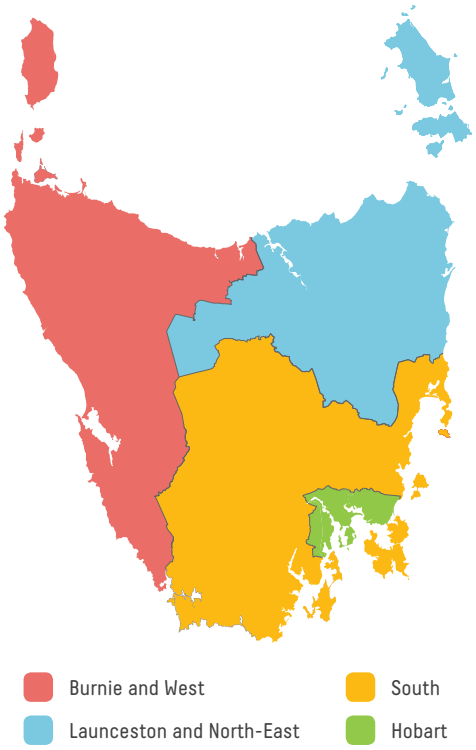
In our consultations all of the people we spoke to, except one person, were not in paid work and were in receipt of an income support payment that constitutes all or most of their household income. For that reason in our thematic analysis we do not distinguish between those people on a low-income and those not in paid work.

The same is true for the survey results. The survey was distributed online and in community organisations inviting responses from people in the three cohorts. Almost two-thirds (62%) of the respondents were both on a low-income and not in paid work, another 13% were older people. The remainder did not specify their income or job status, however given that the distribution networks were providers of services to disadvantaged Tasmanians we have decided to include their contribution.

While we have merged the cohorts in the thematic analysis, the ADII research does separate cohorts based on employment and income status, and we have highlighted useful findings from that research.

The ADII defines 'older Australians' as above 65 years while COTA defines 'older' as above 50 years. The contributions from our consultations and survey capture Tasmanians over the age of 50 and ages are specified where possible.

This Report defines the Tasmanian regions as those used in the ADII which correspond with ABS Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4).



This Report includes solutions that were identified in the research and suggestions made during the consultations, but it does not provide a comprehensive analysis of program and policy solutions or make recommendations.

13 ADII, p9

CONSULTATION METHOD

TasCOSS focus groups

For our focus group consultations, we selected targeted suburbs[14] where the Census identified the highest percentages of households that did not have Internet access. A detailed break down of these locations is at Findings: Geographic areas of digital inclusion disadvantage.

Overall 60% of focus group participants were from southern Tasmania, 19% from the north-west, and 21% from the north and north-east.

We contacted our member organisations and a range of services within the target areas that work with people who experience disadvantage. These organisations include neighbourhood houses, libraries, child and family centres, men's sheds, employment services providers and a range of community service organisations. We asked the organisations to identify times when people in our three cohorts were likely to be on premises so that we could conduct our consultations with them.

We held 23 targeted consultations which consisted of 21 groups of between three and 11 participants, and 2 individual interviews. Through our consultations we reached 99 Tasmanians - 40 men and 59 women.

The breakdown in age of consultation participants is:

Table 4.1 Participant Age Breakdown

Age	%
15-20	2
21-30	16
31-40	19
41-50	15
51-60	22
61-70	14
71-80	6
Over 80	3
Not stated	3

The focus group consultations were semi-structured and open ended, using questions to guide conversations. The questions we asked covered demographic information as well as individuals' lived experience with digital technology. Most of the interviews and discussions were audio-recorded (with participant consent), but in some cases this was not possible because of noise. In these cases the interviewers made notes. The audio-recordings were transcribed.

TasCOSS survey

We also sent out a 'digital access, knowledge and skills' survey to TasCOSS member organisations requesting that they make it available to people in our three target cohorts. We received 99 hard copy surveys. We also distributed the survey online to member organisations through Facebook and the TasCOSS e-news email inviting people in the target cohorts to fill it out. We received 70 online responses. The results of the 169 surveys were analysed using Survey Monkey.

The majority of survey responses came from people who lived in southern Tasmania (82% - Hobart, Kingborough, Glenorchy, Clarence, Brighton, Sorell); 14% from the north (Northern Midlands, Launceston); and 4% from the north-west (Burnie).

The majority of survey respondents were aged between 31 and 60 (60.5%), while 12% were between 15 and 30, and 26% were over the age of 60.

COTA consultations and survey

The results presented in this Report have been informed by research conducted by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) in 2016 and 2018. In 2016, COTA Tasmania conducted a statewide consultation to inform the Tasmanian Government's Active Ageing Plan. A total 841 responses were received through a statewide survey and focus group consultations. The 2018 research conducted for this Report built on the comprehensive 2016 research in order to understand the foundation knowledge and entry level capabilities required for older people to participate in the digital world. To that end, COTA conducted interviews with people who teach digital skills to older people, and it also undertook a survey.

14 Population Health Areas (PHAs) based on the Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2), ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ABS ASGS) 2016.

To identify digital skills teachers a request for interviews was distributed through the COTA e-newsletter and social media. Potential interviewees contacted COTA and were assessed for eligibility. To be eligible, participants would have to previously or currently teach or organise teaching of digital skills to older Tasmanians. The research presented in this report includes input from six interviewees from the West Coast, Kingborough, Derwent Valley and Hobart.

The online, anonymous survey was developed by COTA in consultation with TasCOSS and distributed through the COTA e-newsletter, social media and shared by other organisations. Over two weeks in November/December 2018, 104 responses were received - 95 of these were from people aged over 50 years, with only these responses used in the analysis. Half of the respondents were from Hobart (49.5%) with 15.8% from the south and 14.7% from the north-west, and remaining respondents from north-east, east coast and central Tasmania.

DESKTOP RESEARCH ON DIGITAL DISADVANTAGE

TasCOSS conducted desktop research, relying primarily on the ADII 2018 as the main source of data. The ADII measures the level of digital inclusion across the Australian population and monitors this level over time. While some of the sample sizes in the Tasmanian research are considered small it does provide important insights into digital engagement that can help to guide policies, products and programs to improve digital inclusion.

The full ADII research methodology (including an explanation of the underlying variables, the structure of the sub-indices and the margins of error) is available at www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au.

This Report uses the ADII categories of Accessibility, Affordability and Digital Ability, supplementing the ADII data with results from our consultations.

The Digital Inclusion score

The ADII assesses digital inclusion by comparing the three areas of Accessibility, Affordability and Digital Ability across population groups and geographic areas over time. These elements form the basis of three sub-indices, each of which is built from a range of survey questions relating to Internet products, services and activities.

The sub-indices contribute equally and combine to form the overall ADII score, ranging from 0 to 100. The higher the overall score, the higher the level of inclusion. Score ranges indicate low, medium, or high levels of digital inclusion, according to the following table:

Table 4.2 ADII Sub-Index Score Ranges

	Low	Medium	High
Access	<60	65-75	>80
Affordability	<45	50-60	>65
Digital Ability	<40	45-55	>60
Digital Inclusion Index	<50	55-65	>70

The sub-indices

The Access sub-index has three components:

- Internet Access: frequency, places, and number of access points
- Internet Technology: computers, mobile phones, mobile broadband, and fixed broadband
- Internet Data Allowance: mobile and fixed Internet.

The Affordability sub-index has two components:

- Relative Expenditure: share of household income spent on Internet access
- Value of Expenditure: total Internet data allowance per dollar of expenditure.

The Digital Ability sub-index has three components:

- Attitudes: including notions of control, enthusiasm, learning, and confidence
- Basic Skills: including mobile phone, banking, shopping, community, and information skills
- Activities: including accessing content, communication, transactions, commerce, media, and information.

Other research

There has been a wide range of research undertaken across Australia in recent years on digital inclusion. In preparing this Report, TasCOSS used ABS reports on census data, household expenditure and use of information technology. We also consulted reports of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), other state Councils of Social Service, the Salvation Army Economic Social Impact Surveys and more. A full list of references is at Attachment 1.

METHOD ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis of the TasCOSS focus group consultations was carried out in the following way:

- reading the key primary research documents—the ADII and Census data.
- a first reading of the transcripts and notes in order to identify themes (with reference to the key points arising from the documents above); and
- a second, thorough read of the transcripts and notes, and listening to audios to code information according to themes, noting useful illustrative quotes that could be used in the Report.

COTA drew together the themes from its six consultations and identified useful quotes and suggested solutions. The TasCOSS survey and the COTA survey were both analysed using the Survey Monkey analysis tool.

Our findings

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF DIGITAL INCLUSION DISADVANTAGE

KEY FINDINGS

- According to the ADII Tasmania recorded the largest improvement in digital inclusion in Australia in 2018, due largely to the rollout of NBN services.
- Despite these overall improvements, Tasmania remains the second most digitally disadvantaged State, after South Australia.
- Our position is impacted by the fact that 37.2% of our population live in areas of social disadvantage.[15]
- Geographic areas of digital inclusion disadvantage mirror areas of socio-economic disadvantage in Tasmania. There are towns and suburbs in 28 SA2s where more than 20% of the dwellings do not have Internet access and all but three of these are in areas of highest socio-economic disadvantage.
- There are also disadvantaged cohorts in less disadvantaged parts of the State. Tasmanians in low-income households, those who are not working, older people and those who did not complete secondary school, experience greater digital disadvantage than other population groups.
- Hobart has made gains in digital inclusion that are greater than the capital city average but other parts of the State remain behind, especially the north-west.

TASMANIA'S DISADVANTAGED AREAS

Tasmania is a geographic area of digital inclusion disadvantage. This is evidenced by the ADII that shows Tasmania towards the bottom of the table for digital inclusion across all indices, but also relates to the fact that 37.2% of our population live in areas of social disadvantage.[16]

Research shows there are higher levels of digital exclusion in areas of relative socioeconomic disadvantage. Census data gives us the geographic areas with the highest proportion of dwellings where the Internet is not accessed. TasCOSS used this data to determine the locations for our consultations with people on low incomes, those not in paid employment and older people.

Data show that towns and suburbs with a high proportion of dwellings that do not have internet access are generally areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage. There are 28 SA2s in Tasmania where more than 20% of the dwellings did not have internet access and all but three of these are in areas of highest socio-economic disadvantage according to the Index of Relative Social Disadvantage (IRSD).

15 ABS 2071.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia Stories from the Census, 2016, Canberra, 6 November 2018.
16 ABS 2071.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia Stories from the Census, 2016, Canberra, 6 November 2018.

SA2s Without Internet & Level of Disadvantage

Burnie & West Tasmania	% where Internet not accessed from dwelling	IRSD Quintile
Acton – Upper Burnie/Burnie – Wivenhoe	24.9	1
Devonport	24.9	1
East Devonport	28.2	1
King Island	22.5	3
Latrobe/ Sheffield – Railton	21.3	1
Parklands – Camdale/Somerset/Wynyard	23.6	1
Smithton	25.4	1
Ulverstone	26.7	1
West Coast (Tas.)/Wilderness – West	25.2	1
West Ulverstone	25.2	1

Launceston & North-East Tasmania	% where Internet not accessed from dwelling	IRSD Quintile
Beauty Point – Beaconsfield	22.5	1
Deloraine/Westbury	23.1	1
George Town/Scottsdale/St Helens	25.8	1
Invermay/Mowbray/Newnham/Ravenswood/Waverley	24.2	1
Kings Meadows/South Launceston/Summerhill	20.4	2
Longford/Northern Midlands	26.3	2

Source: Census data for Population Health Areas (PHAs) based on the Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2).[17] The suburbs and towns listed here are the SA2s with the highest proportion of dwellings (>20%) where the Internet is not accessed. Those SA2s are also ranked on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD)[18].

17 Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) 2018, *Social Heath Atlas by Population Health Area*, Torrens University Australia, Adelaide.

18 The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage is a general socio-economic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area.

Hobart & Southern Tasmania	% where Internet not accessed from dwelling	IRSD Quintile
Berriedale/Claremont/Montrose area	23.5	1
Bridgewater – Gagebrook	32.0	1
Central Highlands (Tas.)	27.7	1
Derwent Park – Lutana/Glenorchy	28.2	1
Forestier – Tasman	23.3	1
Geeveston – Dover	23.6	1
Moonah/West Moonah	22.0	1
Mornington – Warrane	24.1	1
New Norfolk	28.6	1
Risdon Vale	25.6	1
Rokeby	23.7	1
Triabunna - Bicheno	26.2	1

PROGRESS IN TASMANIA

Tasmania has the second-lowest digital inclusion score but things are improving.

Tasmania recorded an ADII score of 58.1 in 2018 as shown in table 5.1. Although this is the second lowest score of all states and territories (just 0.2 points above South Australia), it is a major improvement on Tasmania's 2017 ADII result of 50.1. Over the four years to 2017, Tasmania's level of digital inclusion had shown no improvement, meaning the 2018 increase is significant.

Table 5.1 ADII by States

ADII	Australia	Capitals	Rural	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
2018	60.2	62.4	53.9	60.5	61.4	58.9	57.9	59.9	58.1	66.4	58.8
2017	58.0	60.2	51.6	59.1	58.9	56.8	55.1	57.4	50.1	61.6	58.8
2016	55.9	58.4	49.3	56.6	57.1	54.8	52.2	55.8	48.7	62.2	56.3
2015	54.4	57.0	47.5	54.8	54.5	53.4	51.3	56.4	50.9	62.1	58.2
2014	54.0	56.5	48.0	54.9	54.3	53.0	50.4	55.0	50.4	60.3	54.2

Table 5.2 shows Tasmania's ADII improvement over the last year is centred on a major increase in the Access sub-index. In the past year, Tasmania's Access score rose from 64.7 to 73.0 (up 8.3 points). Of the three components that comprise this sub-index, Internet Technology (up 9.7 points) and Internet Data Allowance (up 10.2 points) have contributed most to this increase.

Over the last year, Tasmania also recorded a substantial improvement in its Affordability sub-index score, up by 9.1 points from 45.7 in 2017 to 54.8 in 2018. However, this score is still below the national average in 2018 (57.6). Tasmania's major gain was in Value of Expenditure, which rose 14.1 points.

Tasmania scored 46.6 points for Digital Ability in 2018. This represents a 6.7 point improvement on our 2017 score of 39.9. Despite this increase, Tasmania remains the poorest performing jurisdiction on this sub-index.

Table 5.2 ADII Sub-Index Australia and Tasmania

Access	Australia	Tasmania
2018	73.4	73.0
2017	70.8	64.7
2016	67.7	62.6
2015	64.6	61.2
2014	63.9	58.7

Affordability	Australia	Tasmania
2018	57.6	54.8
2017	55.9	45.7
2016	54.0	44.2
2015	54.3	52.0
2014	56.0	53.5

Ability	Australia	Tasmania
2018	49.5	46.6
2017	47.3	39.9
2016	46.0	39.2
2015	44.4	39.3
2014	42.2	38.9

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Hobart is close to the capital city average but other parts of the State are behind.

Hobart recorded an ADII score of 61.3 in 2018, up 7.3 points from its result in 2014 (54.0). This gain is greater than the capital city average gain over that period (5.9 points), suggesting Hobart is closing the gap with other capitals. The capital city average is 62.4 with Hobart now just 1.1 points behind.

Table 5.3 shows accessibility varies across the State according to the ADII. Hobart scores better than the rest of the state and above the national average on all Access sub-categories. Hobart's digital inclusion gains are a result of a rise in the Access sub-index score, reflecting a rise in NBN connectivity. According to Roy Morgan data[19], the proportion of households with the NBN in Hobart in 2018 is more than double that of any other state capital. Burnie & West Tasmania (68.7) has the worst overall access in the State and is well below the state and national averages.

The 2018 digital inclusion score for rural Tasmania was 55.7 points. This is a rise of 8.4 points since 2014. Like Hobart, improvements in digital inclusion in rural Tasmania were also a consequence of a rise in the Access sub-index score related to NBN take-up.

All three regional areas recorded a substantial improvement in digital inclusion since 2017. In 2018, the ADII score for Launceston & North East Tasmania is 55.1 and Burnie & West Tasmania's current ADII score is 55.3.

19 Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Cook, K, Louie, YM & Holcombe-James, I, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, 2018, *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2018*, RMIT University, Melbourne, for Telstra

Table 5.3 Tasmanian ADII Sub-Indices by Region

2018	Australia	TAS	Capitals	Hobart	Rural TAS	Launceston & NE TAS	Burnie & West TAS	Southern TAS*
Access								
Internet Access	87.1	85.0	88.8	88.0	82.7	83.3	80.8	85.1
Internet Technology	78.7	81.5	79.9	84.8	79.0	81.4	74.9	81.3
Internet Data Allowance	54.4	52.6	56.5	56.7	49.5	50.6	50.4	45.0
	73.4	**73.0**	**75.1**	**76.5**	**70.4**	**71.8**	**68.7**	**70.5**
Affordability								
Relative Expenditure	54.3	49.6	56.8	53.0	46.9	43.7	44.3	60.3
Value of Expenditure	60.9	60.0	63.3	60.7	59.4	56.1	64.2	59.0
	57.6	**54.8**	**60.0**	**56.9**	**53.2**	**49.9**	**54.2**	**59.6**
Digital Ability								
Attitudes	51.0	46.9	53.1	49.8	44.7	46.1	40.6	49.6
Basic Skills	56.7	54.3	59.3	59.9	50.2	49.1	51.1	50.9
Activities	41.0	38.5	43.8	42.3	35.6	35.6	37.0	32.7
	49.5	**46.6**	**52.1**	**50.7**	**43.5**	**43.6**	**42.9**	**44.4**
Digital Inclusion Index	**60.2**	**58.1**	**62.4**	**61.3**	**55.7**	**55.1**	**55.3**	**58.2**

**Sample size is less than 100 and should be interpreted with caution.*

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

As well as geography being a factor in digital inclusion, digital inequalities exist across locations based on a range of sociodemographic factors such as income, age and education.

Tasmanians experience different levels of digital inclusion according to income, employment, education and age.

There are significant gaps in digital inclusion within population groups in Tasmania. These are defined in this Report as:

- The 'income gap' - between those on low incomes (quintile 5 in the ADII) and high incomes (quintile 1 in the ADII);
- The 'employment gap' - those employed and those not in the labour force;
- The 'education gap' - those who completed tertiary education and those who did not complete year 12; and
- The 'age gap' - Tasmanians below the age of 25 and those 65 years and above.

The ADII identifies several socio-demographic groups in Tasmania that are particularly digitally excluded, with ADII scores substantially below the state average (58.1) and Australian average (60.2) as shown in table 5.4. In ascending order, they are: People in quintile 5 (Q5) low income households (41.3), older Australians (41.7), people who did not complete secondary school (44.4) and people not in paid employment (51.4).

Tasmanians with lower income, employment and education levels, as well as older Tasmanians, tend to be less digitally included. These patterns are also consistent with national figures.

Table 5.4 Tasmanian ADII by Socio-Demographic Group

	Australia	Tasmania	Income quintiles					Employment			Education			Age				
			Q1*	Q2*	Q3	Q4	Q5	Employed	Unemployed*	NILF**	Tertiary	Secondary	Less	14-24*	25-34*	35-49*	50-64	65+
2018	60.2	58.1	74.2	68.2	60.3	51.3	41.3	63.7	56.2	51.4	64.9	57.4	44.4	62.2	67.7	65.3	56.7	41.7
2017	58.0	50.1	64.8	60.4	50.8	42.1	39.1	55.4	53.7	45.0	56.0	51.2	39.3	55.6	53.9	53.2	50.1	41.4
2016	55.9	48.7	65.3	61.0	51.5	44.2	32.4	53.9	47.9	43.0	56.5	46.4	37.6	55.0	50.3	57.4	44.7	40.1
2015	54.4	50.9	67.7	61.1	56.2	48.0	36.6	57.6	51.8	43.7	59.3	48.8	38.7	53.2	57.2	55.0	52.0	40.2
2014	54.0	50.4	65.5	59.1	52.2	48.9	37.4	55.9	42.7	44.2	57.6	50.5	41.5	49.9	56.0	55.8	51.8	40.8

**Sample size is less than 100 and result should be interpreted with caution.*
***Not in Labor Force*

Income gap

In the first three years of the ADII, Tasmanians in the Q5 household income bracket recorded not only extremely low digital inclusion scores, but declining ones. ADII scores for this cohort fell marginally between 2014 (37.4) and 2015 (36.6), before a more substantial drop in 2016 (down 4.2 points to 32.4). In the past two years, digital inclusion has improved for this cohort, rising 8.9 points to 41.3. This gain can be attributed to improvements in the Access index (up 13.3 points) and Digital Ability index (up 9.2 points).

However, despite these improvements, in 2018 Tasmanians on the lowest incomes also had the lowest ADII score (41.3) of all population groups in Tasmania.

Chart 5.1 compares the lowest income quintile (Q5) against the highest-income quintile (Q1), the Tasmanian ADII score and the Australian ADII. It shows the digital inclusion gap between high and low income Tasmanians is increasing. In 2018, Tasmanians in the highest-income quintile scored 74.2[20], while those in the lowest-income quintile scored 41.3—an 'income gap' of 32.9 points. This is a wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (28.1 points). The 'income gap' has also increased against the Tasmanian ADII (up 3.8 points) and the national ADII (2.3 points). High-income Tasmanians have higher ADII scores on all three sub-indices than those on low incomes - the gap in Digital Ability is 25.8 points, the Accessibility gap is 24.9 points and significantly, the Affordability gap is 48.1 points.

20 For this socio-demographic group, as the survey returned a small sample size caution should be exercised in interpretation.

Chart 5.1 Income Gap

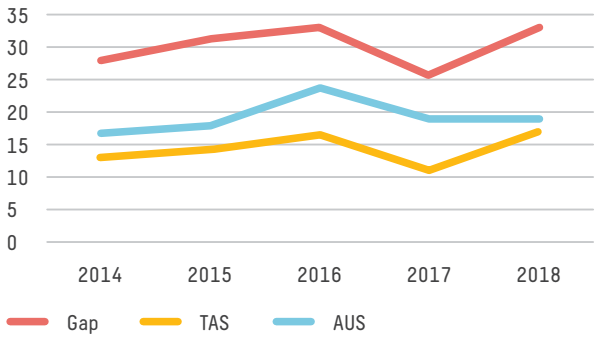
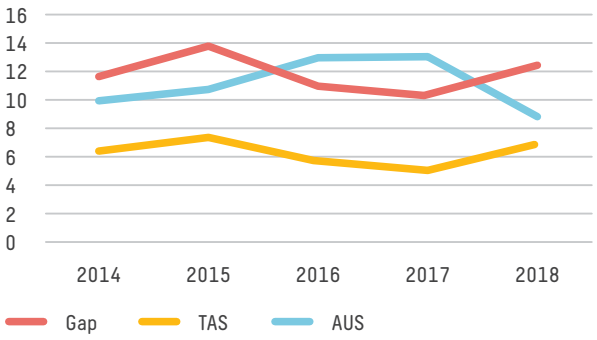


Chart 5.2 Employment Gap



The substantial increase in the Tasmanian state average between 2017 and 2018 (up 8.0 points) was not matched by low income Tasmanians, whose ADII score rose only 2.2 points.

Employment gap

The ADII scores of both Tasmanian workers and those not in the labour force has varied each year since 2014. Despite these fluctuations, both groups recorded an improvement between 2014 and 2018.

Chart 5.2 compares Tasmanians not in the labour force against employed Tasmanians, the Tasmanian ADII score and the Australian ADII. It shows the 'employment gap' (difference between ADII scores for employed Tasmanians and those not in labour force) increased from 11.7 points in 2014 to 12.3 points in 2018. The gap between those not in the labour force and the Tasmanian average increased by a similar margin of 0.5 points to 6.7. In contrast, the gap between Tasmanians not in the labour force and the Australian ADII has improved, narrowing by 1.9 points from 10.9 to 8.8 points. Employed Tasmanians have higher scores on all three sub-indices than those not in the labour force - the gap in Digital Ability is 15.0 points, the Accessibility gap is 12.7 points and the Affordability gap is 9.4 points.

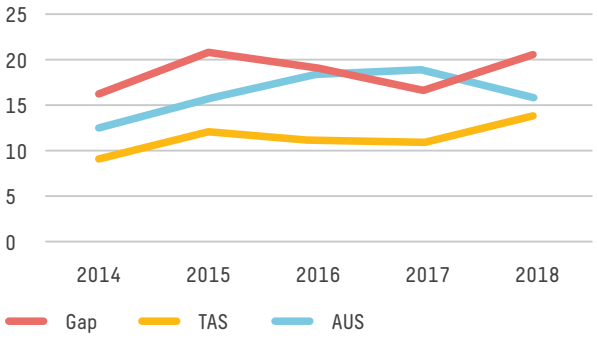
The substantial increase in the Tasmanian state average between 2017 and 2018 (up 8.0 points) was almost matched by Tasmanians not in labour force, whose ADII score rose 6.4 points.

Education gap

In 2018, tertiary-educated Tasmanians scored an ADII of 64.9 points, while those who did not complete secondary school scored 44.4—an 'education gap' of 20.5 points. This is a wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (16.1 points).

Chart 5.3 compares those Tasmanians who did not complete secondary school against tertiary-educated Tasmanians, the Tasmanian ADII score and the Australian ADII. It shows the 'education gap' has also increased against the Tasmanian ADII (up 4.8 points) and the national ADII (3.3 points). Tertiary educated Tasmanians have higher scores on all three sub-indices than those who did not complete secondary school—the gap in Digital Ability is 28.6 points, the Accessibility gap is 21.2 points and the Affordability gap is 11.5 points.

Chart 5.3 Education Gap



The substantial increase in the Tasmanian state average between 2017 and 2018 (up 8.0 points) was not matched by less-educated Tasmanians, whose ADII score rose only 5.1 points.

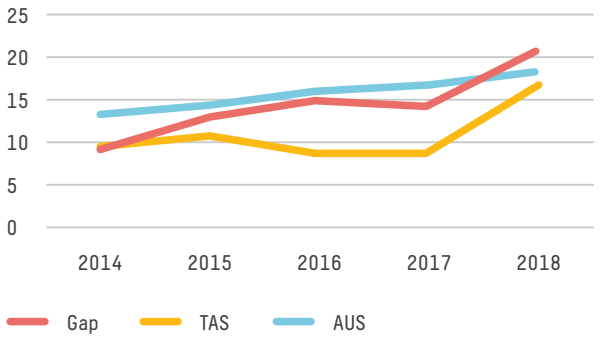
Age gap

Age is also a significant factor impacting digital inclusion in Tasmania. In 2018, Tasmanians over 65 years had the second-lowest ADII score (41.7) of all population groups in Tasmania. The improvements in digital inclusion experienced by all other cohorts over the last year and since 2014, have not been experienced by those aged 65 and over.

Chart 5.4 compares older Tasmanians (aged 65 and over) against younger Tasmanians (14-24 years), the Tasmanian ADII score and the Australian ADII. It shows the digital inclusion gap between older and younger Tasmanians is increasing.

In 2018, older Tasmanians had an ADII score of 41.7 points, while younger Tasmanians scored 62.2 points—an 'age gap' of 20.5 points. This is a wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (9.1 points). The score for this age group was 16.4 points lower than the Tasmanian ADII, with the 'age gap' increasing 6.8 points since 2014.

Chart 5.4 Age Gap



The substantial increase in the overall Tasmanian state average between 2017 and 2018 (up 8.0 points) was not matched by older Tasmanians, whose ADII score rose just 0.9 points from 40.8 in 2014 to 41.7 in 2018. Despite very strong gains made by this age group in the Access and Digital Ability sub-indices (up 16.3 and 11.7 points respectively) since 2014, those gains were almost completely offset by a decline in the Affordability sub-index (down 25.2 points). Older Tasmanians have lower scores on all three sub-indices than young Tasmanians—the gap in Digital Ability is 18.0 points, the Accessibility gap is 17.1 points and the Affordability gap is 26.4 points.

Tasmanians are less digitally included than Australians in the same demographics.

A comparison of figures in table 5.5 shows Tasmanians in lower income, employment, education and older socio-demographic groups, are less digitally included than other Tasmanians, and across most indices, less digitally included than Australians in the same demographic.

Table 5.5 ADII Sub-Indices by Socio-Demographic Group

Access

2018	ADII	Q5 income	NILF	Less educated	65+
TAS	73.0	60.7	66.4	58.8	57.7
AUS	73.4	59.0	64.9	60.8	58.9

Affordability

2018	ADII	Q5 income	NILF	Less educated	65+
TAS	54.8	28.1	49.5	46.1	38.1
AUS	57.6	31.0	52.3	49.0	47.7

Digital Ability

2018	ADII	Q5 income	NILF	Less educated	65+
TAS	46.6	35.0	38.1	28.3	29.3
AUS	49.5	33.8	38.9	32.2	31.5

Income

Tasmanians in the Q5 income quintile recorded a higher ADII score for Access (60.7) and Digital Ability (35.0) than the Australian average for Q5 income (59.0 and 33.8 respectively) but were worse off for the Affordability index (28.1 compared to 31.0). While comparing better to the national average for the same income cohort, these figures are well below the state and national averages for each of the three indices. Low-income people are the most disadvantaged socio-demographic group in Tasmania under the Affordability sub-index.

Employment

Those Tasmanians not in the labour force (66.4) scored higher on the Access index than the national average for those not in the labour force (64.9) but recorded lower scores for Affordability and Digital Ability. Again, figures for this employment cohort are well below the state and national averages for each of the three indices.

Education

Tasmanians who did not complete secondary school scored lower than the Australian averages for this cohort across all three digital index indices of Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. People with lower education levels are the most disadvantaged socio-demographic group in Tasmania under the Digital Ability sub-index.

Age

Older Tasmanians scored lower than the Australian averages for this cohort across all three digital index indices. With regard to Affordability, older Tasmanians (38.1) scored significantly lower than older Australians (47.7). Older people are the most disadvantaged socio-demographic group in Tasmania under the Access sub-index.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW DIGITAL INCLUSION: ACCESSIBILITY

KEY FINDINGS

- Not having access to reliable digital technology is a key characteristic of low digital inclusion.
- Hobart is performing better on digital access than the national average while Burnie and the West are performing more poorly than the other regions.
- Older Tasmanians and those with lower income, employment and education levels tend to have lower levels of digital access than other population groups.
- Most children and young people from Australian low income and disadvantaged households do not have a computer, tablet or iPad at home, and they are less likely to have access to the Internet.
- Living in rental accommodation is an emerging characteristic of low digital inclusion. Tenants are less likely to take on a fixed Internet service and responsibility for the connection is unclear.
- Most Tasmanians interviewed use their smart phones to access the Internet. They tend to live in private or government rental proprieties which did not have the NBN connected.
- People with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, find benefits in being online but can experience health and language barriers to being online.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

> **"To ensure regional Australia is best positioned to retain people and grow in the long term, a strong base of essential infrastructure, social networks, employment opportunities, education and health services are required. Access to good quality telecommunications underpins all these areas."** [21]

The ABS *Household Use of Information Technology* (HUIT) survey reveals the proportion of households with access to the Internet at home has been steadily climbing since 2004-05 but remained constant between 2014-15 and 2016-17 at around 86%[22]. Table 6.1 shows Tasmania has been the worst-performing jurisdiction until edging ahead of South Australia in the most recent survey. In Tasmania, the proportion of households with access to the Internet at home has risen from 62.9% in 2008-09 to 83.4% in 2016-17.

21 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee 2018, *Regional Telecommunications Review—Getting it right out there*, Department of Communications and the Arts, Canberra, p.36.

22 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Household Use of Information Technology*, Australia, 2016-17, released 28 March 2018.

Table 6.1 Households with Internet Access

	2008-09	2010-11	2012-13	2014-15	2016-17
New South Wales	71.2	79.2	80.9	85.3	85.2
Victoria	71.8	78.6	83.6	86.2	86.8
Queensland	73.4	79.1	83.5	86.3	86.3
South Australia	66.5	75.7	81.4	82.4	82.5
Western Australia	75.1	81.4	85.1	88.1	88.4
Tasmania	62.9	70.3	77.9	81.7	83.4
Northern Territory	73.6	78.7	84.9	88.9	89.0
Australian Capital Territory	81.5	88.1	89.4	94.1	94.1
Total (%)	**71.8**	**78.9**	**82.7**	**85.9**	**86.1**

Source: ABS, Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2016-17, released 28 March 2018

Consistent with the ADII, the HUIT shows that as household incomes increase, so does Internet access.

Table 6.2 shows 97% of households in the highest income quintile have Internet connection, compared to 67% of households in the lowest income quintile with Internet access.

The survey also reveals the types of devices used by households to access the Internet. Table 6.3 shows that mobiles or smart phones are used by 86% of Tasmanian households to connect to the Internet, followed by desktop or laptop computers used by 85% of households.

Table 6.2 Households with Internet Access by Income Quintile

Household income quintile	%
Lowest quintile	67.4
Second quintile	75.3
Third quintile	92.2
Fourth quintile	95.1
Highest quintile	96.9

Source: ABS, Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2016-17, released 28 March 2018

Table 6.3 Households with Internet Access by Device Used

	Desktop or laptop computer	Mobile or smart phone	Tablet	Internet connected TV	Internet connected music or video player	Internet connected games console
New South Wales	91.5	92.0	66.6	42.5	20.1	23.3
Victoria	91.7	91.5	67.4	45.2	19.3	29.0
Queensland	91.8	90.6	64.6	39.7	17.3	28.2
South Australia	90.4	89.0	62.6	39.1	15.9	27.9
Western Australia	91.3	90.0	67.8	41.1	17.9	27.3
Tasmania	84.7	85.6	63.9	32.4	16.3	23.8
Northern Territory	92.2	93.6	69.9	45.1	13.7	19.9
Australian Capital Territory	97.6	91.5	71.1	46.0	22.7	31.0

Source: ABS, Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2016-17, released 28 March 2018

Children from low income families are at risk of being left behind.

The Salvation Army's Economic and Social Impact Surveys (ESIS) highlight that Australian children from disadvantaged and low income backgrounds are at risk of being left behind in the new digital age.

The 2016 ESIS report, *Out of Reach*, showed 58% of children and young people from low income households did not have access to the Internet and 74% did not have a computer, tablet or iPad at home[23]. The 2018 ESIS report, *Feeling the Pinch*, revealed children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds were seven times less likely to have access to the Internet compared to the average Australian child[24].

These reports suggest that for disadvantaged children and young people, there is a lack of opportunity for digital participation and a widening gap between children from disadvantaged and low income families compared to children from average Australian households.

Internet and digital participation strongly relate to improved school performance, educational outcomes and increased access to employment and social inclusion. With the digital divide growing for children from disadvantaged and low income families as a result of barriers to access current technology, further disadvantage is likely to be experienced through digital inequalities.

PROGRESS IN TASMANIA

Access to digital technology is improving, largely because of the NBN.

Tasmania's 2018 Digital Access score is 73.0 points as shown in table 6.4. This represents an 8.3 point improvement on the State's 2017 score of 64.7 and a 14.3 point improvement on five years ago as shown in table 6.5. Tasmania has continued to close the accessibility gap and table 6.4 shows the state is only 0.4 points off the national average score. This gap is an improvement from 5.2 points in 2014.

Table 6.4 ADII Access Sub-Index by State (2018)

State/territory	Access
Australia	73.4
Capitals	75.1
Rural	68.4
New South Wales	73.1
Victoria	74.6
Queensland	73.1
South Australia	71.7
Western Australia	72.9
Tasmania	73.0
Australian Capital Territory	76.0
Northern Territory	72.8

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

The improvements in access are happening across the State.

Across Tasmania, table 6.5 shows Hobart has the highest Access score with 76.5 and is the only region above the state average. Hobart also recorded a score above the national average for the first time. For all regions in Tasmania, these scores have greatly improved since 2014, with the most significant increase in Burnie & the West. Despite this significant improvement for Burnie & the West, they continue to have the lowest Access score in Tasmania at 68.7 points.

23 The Salvation Army 2016, *Feeling the Pinch: National Economic & Social Impact Survey*, Blackburn.

24 The Salvation Army 2018, *Out of Reach: National Economic & Social Impact Survey*, Blackburn.

Table 6.5 Tasmanian Access by Region

Access	Australia	TAS	Hobart	Rural TAS	Launceston & NE TAS	Burnie & West TAS	Southern TAS*
2018	73.4	73.0	76.5	70.4	71.8	68.7	70.5
2017	70.8	64.7	69.6	61.0	64.1	56.3	63.2
2016	67.7	62.6	64.5	61.3	62.2	62.0	55.5
2015	64.6	61.2	62.8	60.0	63.0	58.7	50.0
2014	63.9	58.7	63.5	54.9	59.0	48.9	58.3

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Access is not improving in the same way for everyone.

Tasmanians with lower income, employment and education levels, as well as older Tasmanians, tend to have lower levels of digital accessibility.

Table 6.6 shows there are several population groups in Tasmania that are particularly digitally excluded, with Access scores substantially below the state average (73.0 points).

In ascending order, they are: older people (57.7), people who did not complete secondary school (58.8), people in Q5 low income households (60.7), and people not in labour force (66.4).

Table 6.6 Tasmanian Access by Socio-Demographic Group

			Income quintiles					Employment			Education			Age				
	Australia	Tasmania	Q1*	Q2*	Q3	Q4	Q5	Employed	Unemployed*	NILF	Tertiary	Secondary	Less	14-24*	25-34*	35-49*	50-64	65+
2018	73.4	73.0	85.6	82.8	75.1	70.6	60.7	79.1	65.7	66.4	80.0	74.1	58.8	74.8	82.9	81.0	72.0	57.7
2017	70.8	64.7	79.3	71.9	69.9	59.3	53.2	72.8	69.9	57.0	71.2	67.6	51.8	67.9	72.1	69.6	66.6	51.0
2016	67.7	62.6	76.5	80.5	63.3	60.2	47.4	69.8	65.5	54.3	71.6	61.0	49.8	68.8	68.6	71.9	59.4	50.2
2015	64.6	61.2	71.6	72.0	68.5	60.0	48.5	69.2	62.4	53.1	69.8	61.7	45.4	66.6	68.0	66.5	63.4	46.4
2014	63.9	58.7	74.0	69.0	63.2	59.9	46.4	66.8	53.3	47.7	66.6	58.6	48.6	60.1	69.4	67.4	59.2	41.4

Income

Tasmanians in the Q5 household income bracket recorded lower than average Access scores. Over the period 2014–2018, digital access improved for this cohort, rising 14.3 points to 60.7. However, overall access in Tasmania also rose by this same amount to 73.0. These improvements in digital Access leave the gap between Tasmanians in Q5 low income households and those in the highest income quintile at 24.9 points.

Employment

The Access scores of both Tasmanian workers and those not in the labour force have improved annually since 2014. The Access score for those employed increased 12.3 points (from 66.8 to 79.1), while the score of those not in the labour force rose 18.7 points (from 47.7 to 66.4).

Education

In 2018 tertiary-educated Tasmanians scored 80.0 for Access, while those who did not complete secondary school scored 58.8 — an 'education gap' of 21.2 points. Despite the improvement in Access scores for these cohorts, this is a wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (18.0 points).

Age

Age is also a significant factor impacting digital access in Tasmania. In 2018, Tasmanians aged 65 and over recorded the lowest Access score (57.7) of all sociodemographic cohorts. The score for this age group was 15.3 points lower than the state average (73.0). Between 2014 and 2018, digital Access for Tasmanians aged 65 and over improved by 16.3 points.

HOW TASMANIANS EXPERIENCE DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Access to NBN varies depending on where you live.

Tasmanians everywhere seek reliable and fast connections and coverage, but this varies depending on where they live. Most interviewees in the south of the State considered the NBN to be adequate but noted that connections drop out and slowed down at certain times of the day.

> "It does affect it a lot. The Internet drops out when the weather is bad."
>
> — Female, south, age 41-50

> "Now I'm stuck, because I'm in a dead spot. Every time I rent somewhere, it's always a dead spot."
>
> — Female, south, age 31-40

In northern Tasmania there were more complaints about the speed, reliability and coverage of the service. Some noted that there was very little difference between NBN and ADSL, and that they experienced more dropouts since the NBN was connected.

> "I don't find any difference with the speed with NBN and ADSL, if anything it's probably a fraction slower, especially if too many people are on. Here at the library the computers drop out all the time. It's not the library it's the NBN.'
>
> — Female, north, age 21-30

The story is similar for Tasmanians in the north-west where some interviewees complained that the Internet cuts out when the phone rings, or during a storm the NBN cuts out and that makes it difficult to make phone calls.

Low income and unemployed Tasmanians have some challenges accessing the NBN.

Most interviewees in the TasCOSS consultations had some form of access to the Internet whether it was through a smartphone using mobile data or home and satellite NBN connections. The few people who had no access often used public Online Access Centres and Neighbourhood and Community Houses. Several interviewees had no desire to be connected and were not interested in using or learning about the technology and hardware.

> "I don't need Internet at home, I do what I have to do up here (Neighbourhood House) and that's about it. I come here for the social contact as well. I'm not really into computers."
>
> — Female, north, age 61-70

Most interviewees have smartphones and are comfortable and happy to use these to access the Internet. Some interviewees suggested that more up-to-date hardware would make their experiences easier.

Some interviewees lost their access to the Internet when they ran out of credit or experienced disruptions to their service. Their main concerns about losing access were not being able to contact family and friends for connection and conversations as well as in emergencies. Other concerns related to the number of activities now online, leaving those not connected feeling isolated and not able to participate fully in life and their communities.

> "I miss out on business, social engagement, Facebook, talking to friends... I miss all that until I get data again."
>
> — Male, south, age 15-20

Older people have a varied experience of the NBN.

According to COTA's 2018 research, most older Tasmanians who are online have good access to the Internet, but access in rural areas to the NBN is a problem for a small minority. In open-ended comments from the 2018 consultations and the 2016 Active Ageing strategy, participants in rural areas talked about accessing the Internet at community centres or libraries because connection is poor at their house. Some people experienced dropping out and slow connections which meant they were unable to lodge government forms in time and risked missing payments unless they travelled to the nearest Centrelink in town, for example from Rosebery to Burnie. One interviewee noted that telehealth connectivity has been better on NBN, even in rural areas.

Older people use a range of devices.

National research suggests that older people use desktop computers (41%), laptops (27%) and tablets (18%) more than mobile phones (12%), and that they also use desktop computers and tablets more than people aged 18 to 65[25].

Feedback about the most commonly used devices varied between interviewees — some said that laptops were the most popular, others felt that tablets were. The size of smart phones made them less attractive options. Physically using them and pressing icons was difficult for some people, and screens could be difficult to read. The majority of COTA respondents said that the digital device they used the most was a laptop computer (37.9%), followed by mobile or smart phones (28.4%). Some older Tasmanians found a barrier to access was the size of the devices and SIM cards were difficult to manipulate with arthritic hands and they prefer to use computers with larger screens.

> "I use the tablet less now because the screen is smaller and more fiddly, so now I use the computer lots."
>
> — Male, south, age 71-80

Mobile phones have become essential.

Mobile phones have become an essential form of communication and connection for many people on a low income and looking for work.

Some interviewees reported feeling very isolated and fearful of their safety when they ran out of mobile phone credit. Some experience health and safety issues at home that would not ordinarily require a call to emergency services but without phone credit this is the only option available to them.

> "Because I have pay as you go, when I run out I can't contact family in an emergency."
>
> — Female, south, age 41-50

25 Digital lives of older Australians (2016) Australian Communications and Media Authority: https://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/engage-blogs/engage-blogs/Research-snapshots/Digital-lives-of-older-Australians

> "When I run out of credit, I feel isolated as I live in a high crime area."
>
> — Female, north, age 61-70

Living in rental accommodation is a barrier to access.

A majority of low income Tasmanians interviewed accessed the Internet through their mobile phone data as they lived in private or government rental proprieties which did not have an NBN connection. There was uncertainty among interviewees as to who was responsible for NBN connection at rental properties with some suggesting landlords should be compelled to install Internet.

In Tasmania, property owners are responsible for installing the NBN connection and tenants are responsible for connecting an internet service provider. This is the same for government housing where the NBN is installed in newly built properties but is not retro-fitted into existing properties. As Internet access is not considered an essential service, Housing Tasmania tenants are responsible for connecting the Internet through their telecommunications provider.

The personal experience of renters is supported by the research. ACCAN reported in its *Rental Connect Research Study 2018* that there is a lower proportion of fixed Internet service uptake in rented households as well as the perception of a power imbalance between renters and landlords[26].

Renters are more likely to choose mobile services over fixed line Internet for their home. Renters have a lower purchasing power and are more likely to live in their rented home temporarily. This limits them in taking up fixed contracts that are less costly but take time to set up and require a commitment to certain contract periods. These constraints are a high enough incentive to exclusively rely on mobile data. The cost of connection is discussed in more detail below in Affordability.

Health and language are barriers to access.

According to the Tasmanian Government's adult literacy program, 26TEN[27], around one in two Tasmanians do not have the literacy skills they need for work and life and this has a significant impact on access to the digital world. Several consultation participants had low literacy levels and often had trouble accessing websites and communicating with family and friends.

> "I'm learning how to make the computer turn my voice into writing because I can't spell very well. I work with a person at the library to read and spell better."
>
> — Male, north, age 41-50

The people we interviewed who had a disability talked about the importance of being digitally connected so that they can communicate, as the technology gives them a voice and means to be heard. They also valued things like the security of not having to remember lots of dates as they could use the calendar and use online banking to avoid having to carry money.

> "I put things in my diary. So it comes up on there and it will remind me that I've got that appointment at that time, and things like that. I found that really good."
>
> — Female, south, age 31-40

One participant spoke of being able to order her medications using an app and the chemist will deliver them to her or she can go and collect them.

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26 Goeury, A & McMillan, F 2018, *Rental Connect Research Study: Issues faced by renters in Australia's phone and Internet market*, Lonergan, Sydney.

27 26TEN 2018, *Home page*, Tasmanian Government, viewed 23 January 2019, < https://26ten.tas.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Tasmanians who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) have several barriers to accessing the Internet and government services and sites. While they have the appropriate skills they lack the understanding of English that is necessary for navigating sites and services. Even though most government websites have a language option, the translations are difficult to understand.

There are barriers to accessing government sites.

The lack of access to the Internet at home means that low income Tasmanians have difficulty fulfilling the requirements within the employment services system. Tasmanians looking for work are required to report their work activity and job search results using MyGov and Centrelink apps. People on Newstart must do this regularly and if they are unable to access a reliable connection and fail to report their activity, their payments will be cut off.

> "The thing with the job search is that they told us that you get one to five demerits and then you have your payment cut off. And if you miss it for any reason, like say if you log in to MyGov, but you can't log into JobSearch at all. I've had that problem happen, and my payment gets immediately cut off because I can't do it."
>
> —Male, north-east, age 51-60

A pressing issue for many interviewees was the functionality of the MyGov and Centrelink apps and websites. Most people who use the sites reported that at some point they had experienced problems accessing the sites. Low income Tasmanians feel like they are being forced into using the websites and apps over being able to personally attend Centrelink offices. When respondents experienced difficulty with the websites and apps they felt they had no options for help and many abandoned the process.

> "The staff at the Neighbourhood House help to navigate the system, especially MyGov and help set up phones. We have to use MyGov—we were forced to."
>
> —Male, north, age 51-60

CASE STUDY

'Brian' had no access to digital technology at home and was concerned and frustrated due to needing a code to access the Centrelink app. The problem arose when he needed a mobile phone or email address to receive a verification code to activate the Centrelink access, but he did not have either a mobile phone or an email address. He felt he was being unfairly pushed out of his comfort zone and was unsure of why the system was changing with little regard for those who didn't or couldn't use and access digital technology.

> "I'm on MyGov at the moment because I can't go to Centrelink anymore. They reckon I need a mobile phone to get a code to use their computers."

Some people don't want to be online.

In the TasCOSS consultations around half of the people who have no Internet connection at home or have only pre-paid phone data cited the main reason being their choice not to be online. They said they enjoyed the social aspect of being involved in the community. There were one or two people in each consultation group who held the view that they would rather deal with people face-to-face than via computers and digital devices.

> "I'd rather go to the bank and do it there ... it gives me five or ten minutes of exercise if I go to walk to the other end of town every five or ten days, so that's my whole fitness you know."
>
> — Female, south, age 61-70

These interviewees preferred to do their banking face-to-face to make sure transactions had been processed correctly. Some interviewees were wary of online banking and shopping while other people who experience disability and older Tasmanians appreciate being able to do banking and shopping online and having goods delivered to the door.

> 'I just know it's going to be done. If I do it online, I don't know it's going to be done properly. And you have to give your bank details over. I go to the bank, get the cash, go down and pay for it.'
>
> — Female, south, age 71-80

SOLUTIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY

A range of solutions for improving digital accessibility was identified in the desktop research and consultations.

A digital inclusion strategy for Tasmania would need to consider the national context and address some of the accessibility barriers faced by Tasmanians who are on low incomes, not in paid employment and older people.

The Commonwealth Government recently announced the details of its new Universal Service Guarantee (USG).[28] The USG will update the Universal Service Obligation (USO) and will give Australians guaranteed access to broadband as well as voice services. It will ensure current fixed telephone and payphone services are maintained in rural and remote areas and will use the NBN to deliver broadband services.

The Tasmanian Government has been rolling out free Wifi access in various parts of the State since 2015[29]. While the focus has primarily been on tourist locations, that focus could shift in the future to areas of greatest disadvantage and need for Tasmanian residents.

For those Tasmanians who live in rental accommodation, including government housing, it was suggested by participants in the TasCOSS consultations that landlords be required to provide Internet hardware and connections, as they do for other utilities such as electricity and water.

While outside the responsibility of the State Government, consultation participants had suggestions for their telecommunications providers. Some suggested that they could consider rolling over the credit or abolishing expiry dates on credit altogether.

To improve access on websites for CALD Tasmanians it was suggested that information was provided in various languages. In addition, a direct chat line could be established with an interpreter who is capable of remotely accessing the user's computer and guiding them through the sites.

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28 Department of Communications and the Arts, Australian Government, https://www.communications.gov.au/departmental-news/new-universal-service-guarantee-announced, 8 December 2018.

29 Department of State Growth 2019.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW DIGITAL INCLUSION: AFFORDABILITY

KEY FINDINGS

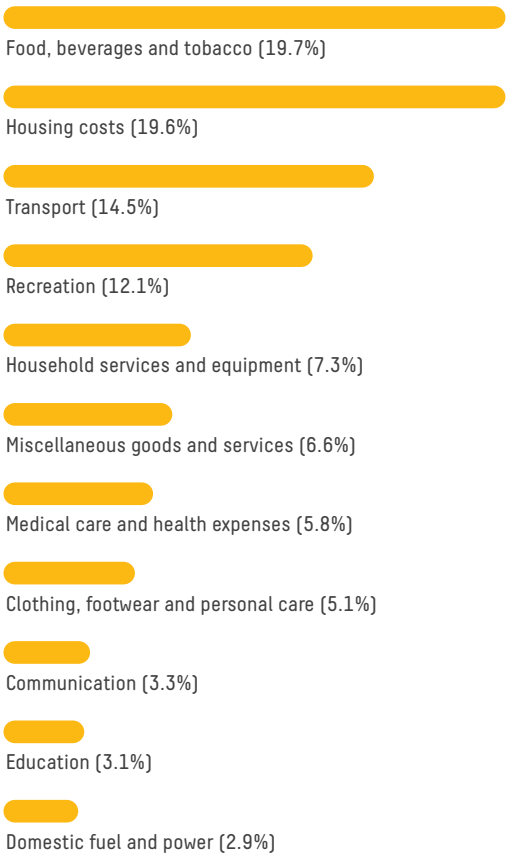
- Not being able to afford access to digital technology is a key characteristic of low digital inclusion.
- Hobart ranks highest on digital affordability in the State while Launceston and North-East Tasmania rank lowest.
- Tasmanians on lower incomes spend a significantly higher proportion of their income on communications, than those on higher incomes.
- The volume of downloads and demand for data has increased significantly requiring people to pay more for data in order to be digitally included.
- Home Internet connection is considered by some low income Tasmanians as a luxury while others make sacrifices so the family can be connected.
- Mobile phones have become an essential form of communication and connection with many people on pre-paid plans that result in higher unit costs.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Those who cannot afford to keep pace with new communications technologies risk being excluded from the opportunities afforded by the new digital future. The higher proportion of low income households in regional and remote Australia makes digital affordability a key barrier to digital inclusion."[30]

The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Household Expenditure Survey*[31] (HES) shows average weekly household expenditure on communications in Australia was $46.62, or 3.3% of total good and services expenditure. Communications spending as a share of total household goods and services expenditure is shown in chart 7.1 below.

Chart 7.1 Total Expenditure by Household Category 2017



Source: ABS, Cat 6530.0—Household Expenditure Survey, Australia, Summary of Results 2015-16, released 13 September 2017

30 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee 2018, *Regional Telecommunications Review—Getting it right out there*, Department of Communications and the Arts, Canberra, p.5.

31 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, *Household Expenditure Survey*, Cat. no. 6530.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

According to the HES, table 7.1 shows that while national average household communications expenditure has increased by 9.9% since the previous survey, it has declined by 2.9% as a proportion of household expenditure.

Table 7.1 Change in Communications Expenditure

Average Weekly Expenditure	2003-04	2009-10	2015-16	Change 2009-10 to 2015-16
Communications	$32.55	$42.44	$46.62	9.9%
Proportion of total expenditure	3.6%	3.4%	3.3%	-2.9%

Source: ABS, Cat 6530.0—Household Expenditure Survey, Australia, Summary of Results 2015-16, released 13 September 2017

Over the last decade, increases in Internet and telecommunications usage (as more services go online and more platforms are available online) have resulted in significant decreases in prices for telecommunications products—including data. This has resulted in a slight increase in expenditure but a gradual decrease in its share of household expenditure over the last 12 years, from 3.6% of expenditure in 2003-04 to 3.3% in 2015-16 as shown in table 7.1.

A better reflection of communications affordability is comparing household expenditure as a proportion of income, rather than expenditure. The HES survey reveals that communications expenditure is regressive - those on low incomes spend proportionately more on telecommunications than those on higher incomes, both as a proportion of total spending and as a proportion of gross income. This is confirmed by research from ACCAN[32] that reveals telecommunications expenditure is not only significant in the household budget, it is also regressive in that it impacts proportionately more on low income households.

This is because those on higher incomes are typically able to save a proportion of their income, and therefore any expenditure is a smaller proportion of income than expenditure. By contrast, low-income households have little or no capacity for savings as they spend what they earn, meaning any expenditure makes up a larger proportion of income than in high-income households.

For low income earners, the real (after adjusting for inflation) expenditure on telecommunications has increased as a proportion of household expenditure (Ogle 2017, p.11). Chart 7.2 below shows in real terms, expenditure on telecommunications has increased for the lowest income quintile over the last six years while it has decreased for average Australian households.

Chart 7.2 Change in Real Household Expenditure on Telecommunications

Source: Telecommunications Expenditure in Australia, Ogle, 2017

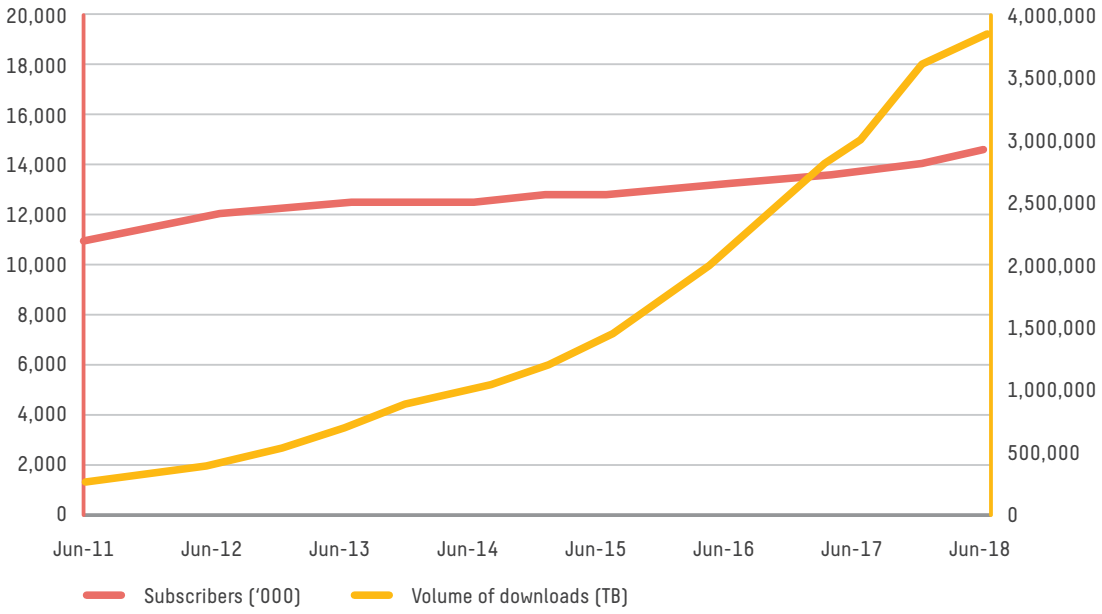
The increasing sophistication of content on websites and applications requires more download and upload allowances for users to continue to access these services and businesses. This is reflected in chart 7.3 that shows the volume of downloads (representing the demand for data) has grown rapidly over the last seven years. Despite the rapid rollout of the NBN, growth in Internet subscribers has been negligible over this same period, demonstrating that people need more data to be digitally included.

32 ACCAN/SACOSS *Telecommunications Expenditure in Australia, Dr Greg Ogle, November 2017*

This presents an equity issue for people living on low incomes as they have a very limited financial means to ensure they can keep up with the costs required to be online.

Cheaper plans that are affordable to low-income people offer lower data allowances, disadvantaging them through higher data unit prices for a product with increasing demand.

Chart 7.3 Internet subscribers vs volume of downloads



Source: ABS Cat 8153.0 – Internet Activity, Australia, June 2018, summary, released 2 October 2018.

A 2016 national survey of low income households by Mint Research[33] for ACCAN and the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) revealed:

- 66% of low income consumers rated telecommunication costs in the top five most important factors in their day-to-day household budgets;
- 62% reported experiencing either difficulty paying, having to cut back or having to stop using one or more telecommunications services for financial reasons in the last 12 months;
- those on Newstart, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payment are most likely to have difficulty paying, to be cutting back or stopping their telecommunications services; while those on the Age Pension have the fewest problems;
- low income families with dependent children experience higher rates of financial difficulty with telecommunications than those without children; and
- around half of respondents said they always, usually or sometimes limit their use of a mobile phone, while just under half limited their use of a landline phone (43%) and the Internet (41%), and 10% stopped using a landline altogether.

Low income families are missing out.

The most recent Salvation Army ESIS report, *Feeling the Pinch*[34], reinforced that digital access, participation and affordability remain significant issues for many disadvantaged Australians.

33 SACOSS and ACCAN, Connectivity Costs, Telecommunications affordability for low income Australians, Greg Ogle and Vanessa Musolino, November 2016

34 The Salvation Army 2018.

The national survey identified that there is a considerable gap between those who have access and can afford the Internet and those who cannot. The survey found that for many respondents, affordable devices and Internet access were out of reach:

- 65% could not afford a computer, laptop or tablet;
- 58% could not afford an Internet connection at home; and
- 15% of jobseekers reported that lack of Internet access impacted on their ability to look for jobs.

For those respondents who did have a mobile phone and the Internet connected at home, people were paying high charges. On average, respondents spent more than $32 per week for mobile phone and home Internet, accounting for 7% of their weekly income.

Results from the Salvation Army reserch indicate that 61% of Australian households were not able to afford a computer, laptop or tablet and almost half could not afford an Internet connection at home. For many children and families, digital access precluded them from taking advantage of technological and educational opportunities and benefits. Access to more affordable, reliable Internet and mobile devices would greatly benefit households to be able to more fully participate online.

PROGRESS IN TASMANIA

Table 7.2 shows weekly communications expenditure in Tasmania as a proportion of total spending on goods and services. This table also shows that in Tasmania, while average weekly household spending on communications was lower than the national average at $39.99, as a proportion of total good and services expenditure, it is slightly higher than the national average at 3.5%.

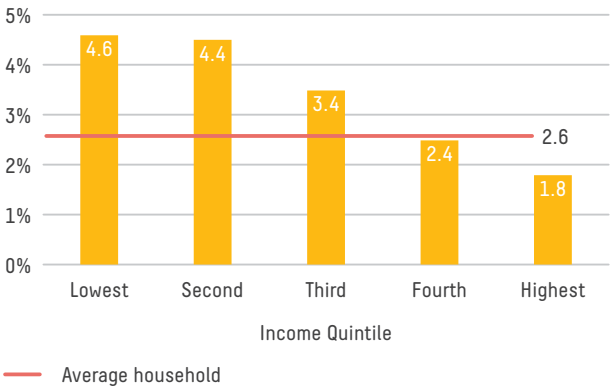
Table 7.2 Communications Expenditure by Income Quintile

Tasmania	Gross Income Quintile					
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest	Average
Av. weekly communications spending	$20.09	$34.62	$41.86	$46.86	$57.83	$39.99
% total goods & services	4.1%	4.4%	3.8%	3.2%	3.1%	3.5%

Source: ABS 2017, Household Expenditure Survey, Cat. no. 6530.0, ABS, Canberra

Chart 7.4 shows Tasmanians on lower incomes spend a significantly higher proportion of their income on communications, than those on higher incomes. Despite Tasmanians in the lowest income quintile spending just over a third of the amount on communications than those in the highest quintile (table 7.2), as a proportion of income chart 7.4 shows Tasmanians in the lowest income quintile spend over two-and-a-half times more on communications than those in the highest quintile.

Chart 7.4 Communications Expenditure as a Proportion of Income



Source: ABS 2017, Household Expenditure Survey, Cat. no. 6530.0, ABS, Canberra

Tasmania has reduced the affordability gap but there's still a way to go.

The ADII describes affordability as the relative expenditure of household income spent on Internet access and the value of that expenditure in terms of data allowance. Tasmania's 2018 Digital Affordability score as shown in table 7.3 is 54.8 points.

This represents a 9.1 point improvement on the State's 2017 score of 45.7 but only a 1.3 point improvement on five years ago. This year, Tasmania reduced the 'affordability gap' with the national average to 2.8 points, after it blew out to 10.2 points the previous year.

Table 7.3 ADII Affordability Sub-Index by State

2018	AUS	Capitals	Rural	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
Affordability	57.6	60.0	50.4	59.0	58.0	56.0	54.6	56.8	54.8	67.3	54.7

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Hobart has medium affordability but Launceston & the North-East less so.

Across Tasmania, table 7.4 shows Hobart has the highest Affordability score with 56.9 points and is the only region above the state average. For all regions in Tasmania, these scores have greatly improved on last year, with rural Tasmania and Burnie & the West improving since 2014, while Hobart and Launceston & the North-East recorded worse figures than 2014.

Launceston & North-East Tasmania have the lowest Affordability score with 49.9 points, 4.9 points behind the Tasmanian average and 7.7 points behind the Australian average.

Table 7.4 Tasmanian Affordability by Region

Affordability	Australia	TAS	Hobart	Rural TAS	Launceston & NE TAS	Burnie & West TAS	Southern TAS*
2018	57.6	54.8	56.9	53.2	49.9	54.2	59.6
2017	55.9	45.7	49.5	42.5	43.4	41.1	42.8
2016	54.0	44.2	46.8	42.4	41.6	43.8	41.3
2015	54.3	52.0	55.1	49.7	47.3	54.3	43.8
2014	56.0	53.5	57.5	49.7	53.4	45.1	46.2

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Older Tasmanians and Tasmanians with lower income, employment and education, tend to have lower levels of digital affordability.

Income

Tasmanians in the lowest (Q5) household income bracket have recorded not only extremely low Affordability scores, but declining ones. Table 7.5 shows Affordability scores for this cohort fell significantly between 2014 (37.6) and 2016 (24.0), before improving in 2017 and dropping again last year to 28.1 points. The Affordability score for the lowest income cohort (28.1) is almost half the Tasmanian average (54.8).

Employment

Affordability scores for employed Tasmanians and those not in the labour force have fluctuated annually since 2014, with table 7.5 showing the Affordability score for employed people improving since 2014 but declining for those not in the labour force. Both cohorts have improved their Affordability score for each of the last two years, however, the Affordability gap between the two has also increased from 1.0 point in 2016 to 9.4 points in 2018.

Education

In 2018 tertiary-educated Tasmanians had an Affordability score of 57.6, while those who did not complete secondary school scored 46.1—an 'education gap' of 11.5 points. This is a wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (6.1 points) and last year (7.0 points).

Age

Age is also a significant factor impacting digital affordability in Tasmania. In 2018, Tasmanians aged 65 and over recorded the lowest Affordability score (38.1) of all age cohorts. Table 7.5 shows the score for this age group was 16.7 points lower than the state average (54.8). Between 2014 and 2018, digital affordability for Tasmanians aged 65 and over declined significantly, with the Affordability score falling 25.2 points from 63.3 in 2014 to 38.1 in 2018.

Scores in Affordability were significantly lower for Tasmanians aged over 65 compared to their mainland counterparts at 38.1 points while all other states and territories scored over 45. This was largely due to the very low scores in the Relative Expenditure (31.7 points while all other states and territories scored over 41, and the highest being NSW at 46.6). Relative Expenditure scores (that measure the share of household income spent on Internet access) decreased by 17.4 points from 2017. Since the ADII survey began in 2014, Relative Expenditure scores for Tasmanians over 65 has decreased by 39.2 points.

Table 7.5 Tasmanian Affordability by Socio-demographic Group

			Income quintiles					Employment			Education			Age				
	Australia	Tasmania	Q1*	Q2*	Q3	Q4	Q5	Employed	Unemployed*	NILF	Tertiary	Secondary	Less	14-24*	25-34*	35-49*	50-64	65+
2018	57.6	54.8	76.2	66.4	55.6	40.8	28.1	58.9	52.8	49.5	57.6	52.2	46.1	64.5	57.1	60.0	54.5	38.1
2017	55.9	45.7	69.5	60.2	38.0	36.3	30.5	47.0	45.0	44.5	47.2	47.1	40.2	56.9	38.9	40.3	48.7	45.3
2016	54.0	44.2	63.1	54.9	47.9	31.4	24.0	44.6	45.3	43.6	50.8	39.8	38.2	52.2	29.7	51.2	42.3	42.6
2015	54.3	52.0	75.8	57.6	52.4	47.5	34.2	56.1	45.6	48.3	59.3	45.2	49.0	45.5	48.4	51.3	56.8	52.2
2014	56.0	53.5	70.8	54.7	52.4	47.2	37.6	53.3	32.1	59.7	58.0	53.4	51.9	45.8	37.4	52.9	60.1	63.3

HOW TASMANIANS EXPERIENCE DIGITAL AFFORDABILITY

Phones are essential but home Internet can be a 'luxury'.

The average cost of accessing digital technology for low income, unemployed and older Tasmanians is $107 per month. Those people we talked to who did not have Internet at home said they could not afford the cost of initial connection, especially those on Newstart allowance. It can cost low income Tasmanians one-fifth to one-quarter of their monthly income to pay for an NBN connection. Connection was either considered a luxury that was not required, or people made other sacrifices to enable the family to be digitally connected.

> "I choose some things over other things. Yeah, which makes it tough. Because it's just me and my two children and so it's only one wage coming in. But if it was cheaper, that'd be probably a big help for me."
>
> — Female, north-west, age 21-30

> "We don't live our life around that sort of stuff. I wasn't prepared to commit to something that was considered a luxury."
>
> — Female, north-west, age 31-40

> "The money on Newstart, I can't afford to pay the bills I've got now, so yeah, it's a definite no."
>
> — Male, north-west, age 51-60

CASE STUDY

'Adella', a mother and a migrant, said she purchased her children's clothes from charity shops so that she can find the money to pay for the Internet connection at the home.

She said that her children need to use it for schoolwork and she likes to be able to speak to her family back in her home country.

Managing the costs of connection is a challenge.

Around half the participants reported that they were on a pre-paid service for their mobile phone. The main reason for this choice was to have more control over their finances and to avoid a huge bill at the end of each month. For those on pre-paid plans some have unlimited calls and texts and others have limited calls and texts, while all have a limit to their data allowance. When their credit is close to running out participants either recharge their data earlier or opt to stay without credit and digital access until the next month begins.

> **"When my pre-paid runs out I just don't use it. I need the money for other things like food and fuel."**
>
> **— Female, south, age 31-40**

One of the main issues people reported about their pre-paid access was that if they failed to use all their credit for data or calls and texts, the credit disappeared and they had essentially lost the money they had spent purchasing extra credit.

Those who used pre-paid data from their phone to access the Internet did so because they could not afford the initial NBN connection fee of several hundred dollars, but they realise this can lead to higher costs than home Internet connections. When an individual on a plan uses above their allotted data the provider automatically charges high rates for small amounts of gigabytes. For example, a monthly plan may provide 25 gigabytes for $60, but when a customer goes over their limit extra data is automatically provided at $10 for an additional one gigabyte.

Most interviewees with NBN connection were on fixed plans with only a few people having pre-paid Internet access. Some participants on NBN plans found that they often incurred extra fees, especially if they were late paying their accounts.

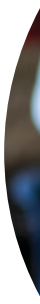
> **"I think my plan is $145 a month. But it usually comes out at $160 to $170 a month."**
>
> **— Male, south, age 31-40**

There were several interviewees who had shared a connection with their neighbour or a family member who lived next door. One resident would have the NBN box installed on their property and then halve the cost of the account with neighbours, giving two households access to unlimited plans.

Some participants used older laptops and desktops that could not connect to the networks, and some chose pre-paid phone plans so they could use their own older device and save money. This also meant their technology was slower and had less capacity.

What Tasmanians would do online if they could afford to

Those people who had pre-paid, data limits and those who were restricted by the cost of connections would typically like the opportunity to access entertainment streaming services. They recognise that the cost of online entertainment is far cheaper than taking their family to the cinema or other expensive family outings. Others were keen to be able to use video calls and new social media platforms to communicate with family and friends. Some wished they could access more games and music while others would like to be able to access better information to help them manage their healthcare.



SOLUTIONS FOR AFFORDABILITY

A range of solutions for digital affordability were identified in the desktop research and consultations.

While the affordability of access to digital technology sits largely with telecommunications providers there are some measures the State Government could take to address the barriers, including unmetering data as suggested by the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review:

> "Government, business, and everyday users are increasingly expecting to use the Internet on a daily basis. If everyone is expected to engage digitally, then the needs of everyone should be considered. Governments and industry must reduce barriers to people engaging with essential services online, including unmetering data for access to government sites."[35]

Some interviewees suggested introducing a telecommunications concession for low income Tasmanians, similar to electricity concessions.

The provision of more free Wifi hotspots and better promotion of existing hotspots was also suggested.

Many interviewees suggested that instead of their telecommunications provider automatically providing extra data they should give the customer the choice to accept or decline the offer. This would be similar to the current Aurora Pay As You Go (PAYG) system that allows a customer to select $20 emergency credit. If this were the case, customers who only had a few days left of their current billing cycle could opt to be without data for a few days rather than incur extra charges that they may not be able to afford. It was also suggested that making available basic, cheap plans with adequate data would benefit consumers on low incomes.

35 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee 2018, *Regional Telecommunications Review—Getting it right out there*, Department of Communications and the Arts, Canberra, p.5.

FOUNDATION KNOWLEDGE & ENTRY LEVEL CAPABILITIES: DIGITAL ABILITY

KEY FINDINGS

- The knowledge and skill levels of Tasmanians are diverse. While there are literacy, health and language barriers, many people can do foundation activities like searching for information, sending emails, paying bills, shopping and applying for jobs.
- On digital ability Hobart ranks above the national average while Burnie and the West is the poorest performing region in the State.
- Tasmanians who are older, experience lower income, employment and education levels demonstrate a lower level of digital ability than other population groups.
- The digital ability of Tasmanians has improved over the past five years but the State remains the worst-performing jurisdiction for digital ability in Australia.
- Low income Tasmanians find the terminology about plans and contracts difficult to understand and they stay with what they have rather than seeking out cheaper alternatives.
- Older Tasmanians have a range of knowledge and skills in using digital technology but low confidence is the largest barrier for them learning about digital technology.
- Digital programs are available in Tasmanian communities but many older people don't know about them.

Foundation knowledge and entry level capabilities are generally considered to include using a keyboard, mouse and operating touch-screen technology, as well as word processing, managing files on laptops and managing privacy settings on mobile phones.

Capabilities also include basic online operations such as email, Internet search, completing an online form and accessing government and essential business services (banking, pay bills). Other foundation skills are being able to use Facebook and other social media, shop online, share photos and use websites and apps.[36]

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

According to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, there is a crisis of confidence when it comes to using and understanding digital technology in regional and remote Australia. In TasCOSS' consultations, we heard that people often lack the knowledge and experience of different technology, how it can be used and how to troubleshoot problems.

As more and more essential services are being moved to digital platforms (such as online banking, education, business and government services), people are expected to have Internet access and essential skills to navigate websites and perform tasks. This creates a dual problem for people in disadvantaged households and regional communities, in that not only are people expected to know more about digital technologies, but accessing the required knowledge can be more difficult, either through connectivity, cost or available resources to develop the necessary technical and digital skills.

In recent years there has been a significant national focus on investing in and building the necessary physical infrastructure for mobile and broadband technology. What is equally important, especially for people experiencing disadvantage, is building their digital literacy and technical capabilities.

36 UK Government, Department of Education, *Essential Digital Skills Framework*, 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework

Consumers with limited digital literacy are at increasing risk of being excluded from the opportunities presented by the new digital age, perpetuating further socioeconomic disadvantage. People are increasingly being expected to use the Internet to engage with a range of business and government services, as well as every day activities such as entertainment and social interactions. As this expectation grows, more support is needed to reduce the barriers to digital knowledge and ability.

PROGRESS IN TASMANIA

Digital ability is improving but is behind other states.

Tasmania's 2018 Digital Ability score is 46.6 points. This represents a 6.7 point improvement on the State's 2017 score of 39.9 and a 7.7 point improvement on five years ago. Despite this increase, table 8.1 shows Tasmania remains the poorest performing state or territory on this sub-index, behind the ACT (best-performing jurisdiction on 55.9) and the national average (49.5).

Table 8.1 ADII Digital Ability Sub-Index by State

2018	AUS	Capitals	Rural	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
Digital Ability	49.5	52.1	42.9	49.4	51.4	47.7	47.5	50.1	46.6	55.9	48.8

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Digital ability has improved across the State in the past year.

Across Tasmania, table 8.2 shows Hobart has the highest score for Digital Ability with 50.7 and is the only region above the State average. Hobart also recorded a score above the national average for the first time. Burnie & the West has the lowest Digital Ability score of 42.9 points. For all regions in Tasmania, these scores are a vast improvement on 2014, however with the exception of Hobart, much of the improvement has been recorded only in the last year.

Table 8.2 Tasmanian Digital Ability by Region

Digital Ability	Australia	TAS	Hobart	Rural TAS	Launceston & NE TAS	Burnie & West TAS	Southern TAS*
2018	49.5	46.6	50.7	43.5	43.6	42.9	44.4
2017	47.3	39.9	45.4	35.8	35.9	33.7	41.6
2016	46.0	39.2	42.6	36.8	37.8	35.8	36.4
2015	44.4	39.3	43.6	36.1	40.9	30.8	32.4
2014	42.2	38.9	41.0	37.3	38.6	33.4	46.8

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

People have a range of skills but there are gaps between population groups.

Table 8.3 shows there are several demographic groups in Tasmania that are particularly digitally excluded, with Digital Ability scores substantially below the state average (46.6) and the national average (49.5). In ascending order, they are: People who did not complete secondary school (28.3); older Australians (29.3); people in Q5 low income households (35.0); and those not in the labour force (38.1).

Table 8.3 Tasmanian Digital Ability by Socio-Demographic Group

			Income quintiles					Employment			Education			Age				
	Australia	Tasmania	Q1*	Q2*	Q3	Q4	Q5	Employed	Unemployed*	NILF	Tertiary	Secondary	Less	14-24*	25-34*	35-49*	50-64	65+
2018	49.5	46.6	60.8	55.5	50.1	42.6	35.0	53.1	50.0	38.1	56.9	46.1	28.3	47.3	63.0	54.8	43.6	29.3
2017	47.3	39.9	45.7	49.2	44.6	30.6	33.5	46.3	46.0	33.5	49.6	38.9	25.8	42.0	50.5	49.8	34.9	27.9
2016	46.0	39.2	56.2	47.7	43.3	41.0	25.8	47.5	33.1	31.2	47.0	38.4	24.8	44.1	52.6	48.9	32.3	27.7
2015	44.4	39.3	55.8	53.9	47.5	36.4	27.0	47.4	47.5	29.8	48.8	39.4	21.8	47.6	55.4	47.2	35.8	21.9
2014	42.2	38.9	51.7	53.5	41.0	39.5	28.2	47.7	42.5	25.2	48.1	39.4	24.1	43.7	61.2	47.1	36.2	17.6

Tasmanians with lower income, employment and education levels, as well as older Tasmanians, demonstrate lower levels of digital ability.

In table 8.3, the first three years of data collection for the ADII (2014–2016) show Tasmanians in the Q5 household income bracket recorded not only extremely low Digital Ability scores, but declining ones. Digital Ability scores for this cohort fell from 28.2 in 2014 to 25.8 in 2016 before improving over the last two years to 35.0 points.

Income

Despite the recent improvements in digital ability for low income Tasmanians, the gap between Tasmanians in Q5 low income households and the overall Tasmanian population increased marginally from 10.7 points in 2014 to 11.6 points in 2018. The substantial increase in the Tasmanian state average between 2017 and 2018 (up 6.7 points) was not matched by low income Tasmanians (whose Digital Ability score increased by 1.5 points).

Employment

The Digital Ability scores of employed Tasmanians and those not in the labour force have fluctuated but improved overall since 2014. The Digital Ability score for those employed increased 5.4 points (from 47.7 to 53.1), while the score of those not in the labour force rose 12.9 points (from 25.2 to 38.1).

Education

Tertiary-educated Tasmanians have improved their Digital Ability score by 8.8 points since 2014 to 56.9 points in 2018, while those who did not complete secondary school scored 28.3—an 'education gap' of 28.6 points. This is a slightly wider gap than that recorded in 2014 (24 points).

Age

Age is also a significant factor impacting digital ability in Tasmania. In 2018, Tasmanians aged 65 and over recorded the lowest score (29.3) of all Digital Ability age cohorts. The score for this age group was 17.3 points lower than the state average (46.6). Since 2018, digital ability for Tasmanians aged 65 and over has continued to improve incrementally, with the Digital Ability score rising from 17.6 in 2014 to 29.3 points in 2018.

HOW TASMANIANS EXPERIENCE DIGITAL ABILITY

Tasmanians on low incomes have a range of skills when it comes to using the Internet.

Many Tasmanians are quite capable with online tasks while some have to get help with certain activities and others have no skills in this area.

TasCOSS survey respondents are proficient at searching the Internet for information (89%) and searching for products and services (84%), while 68% can use the Internet to search and apply for jobs. Around 70% of people said they could use their device or computer to access and use online services, pay bills, use MyGov and write letters and job applications. Depending on the task, between 18% and 28% of respondents said they did not have the skills to do this online and up to 10% said they can do these tasks with help.

Around half the respondents talk to people in games and groups on the Internet, while 62% use and buy music, movies and TV shows, and 76% buy from online shops. More are capable of sending and receiving emails (83%), sharing photos (76%), and making changes to photos (72%). 72% can use video calls like FaceTime and Skype.

Most older Tasmanians who use digital devices have a good understanding of the technology.

Responses from COTA's Active Ageing survey suggest that older people who are online generally feel confident in their understanding of technology, though people over 75 years appear to have poorer understanding than those aged 50 to 74 years. Seventy-five per cent of Tasmanians between 50 and 74 felt they had good, very good or excellent understanding of modern technology, while 42% of those 75 and over had good, very good or excellent understanding.

Most older Tasmanians understand the importance and potential benefits of getting online, even those who don't want to go online. Many recognised that their knowledge of the rapidly advancing technology is difficult to maintain but most of them are keen to learn and actively seek out classes and lessons at libraries and Neighbourhood and Community Houses. Older Tasmanians particularly welcome opportunities to keep up with their children and grandchildren.

Some appreciated that they were able to communicate with their family in a different, more visual way especially if relatives lived outside of Tasmania.

> "We come to class and we're taught new things all the time, things we didn't know anything about didn't know existed. That's what makes it interesting."
>
> — Female, north, age 61-70

Most older respondents taught themselves to get online (36%) while 30% learned from family or friends and others learned through work or education, or formal programs.

Plans & contracts are hard to understand.

Many low income interviewees found the terminology about plans and contracts difficult to understand. Rather than confidently shopping around for the best deal possible, they are inclined to stay with an existing deal, even though it may be less affordable. They prefer to know what they are getting rather than get caught out on new aspects of contracts that they don't understand.

> "I just do mine by comparison with other people. I think, oh, I'm on a good thing. I'll stick with it."
>
> — Female, north, age 61-70

> "I've been with Telstra for 30 odd years so I just stick with them... Better the devil you know."
>
> — Male, south, age 71-80

> "The language used in contracts and the length of them is too long so it's very hard to understand what the contract says and then we get caught when things go wrong or break."
>
> — Female, south, age 71-80

Having low confidence is the biggest barrier for older people learning about digital technology.

Older people in the TasCOSS and COTA consultations talked about lacking confidence in learning and are often fearful about technology and asking for help. They typically fear they will make mistakes and break devices both physically or by 'clicking the wrong thing' and being made to feel 'stupid'. A significant cause of disengagement is when older people are made to feel 'stupid' or being patronised by tutors which negatively affects confidence.

Over a quarter (26.7%) of those who said they had concerns or hesitations about going online said they felt that they may struggle to learn something new, suggesting a lack of confidence in their ability. Comments about poor understanding or confidence were the second most commonly mentioned issue in open-ended comments in COTA's 2018 survey.

> "I am afraid to experiment on a computer or phone in case I do something I can't undo."
>
> — Female, south, age 71-80

People feel safe online but security is a reason older people don't go online in the first place.

The majority of COTA's Active Ageing survey respondents feel safe online but people over 75 years tend to feel less safe than those aged 50 to 74 years. Over half of the COTA survey respondents (52.6%) felt ready to go online but 20% of these respondents also felt that something had stopped them from going online earlier or made them hesitant about it; the most common concern being about security. Of those who were not ready to go online (47.4%), security and affordability were the reasons for their hesitation, particularly being unsure about what device or Internet plan to get.

Some people feel they are being forced online and prefer face-to-face.

Feeling as though they were being forced online was a barrier for some older Tasmanians and this can stop them engaging with digital technology.

Around a quarter of COTA respondents did not want to go online but felt they were being forced to (24%). Some people in the TasCOSS consultations mentioned that they did not like being forced online, and that it made them resistant to get online because they were frustrated or felt disempowered and devalued by the services and businesses moving online.

> "I don't like being forced to use it by government departments and others. I prefer personal contact."
>
> — Female, south, age 61-70

> "It is very disappointing that so many government agencies are forcing elderly people to use [their online services] ... If it wasn't for our daughter's assistance, we would be hopelessly lost regarding it all."
>
> — Female, north, age 81-90

Older people value and want to be able to make face-to-face connections, not just with services and businesses they use, but also with friends and family. Some people commented that while connecting with friends and family online was of real benefit, face-to-face communication was much more meaningful in 'the real world' and cannot be replaced by technology.

> "Although using emails to keep in touch with friends and others is wonderful, I think communication face-to-face is still the best way to enjoy dialogue."
>
> — Female, north, age 61-70

Not everyone knows about digital learning programs.

Digital programs are available in most Tasmanian communities, but people don't always know about them. Only 12.6% of older COTA survey respondents learned to use a digital device or go online through a formal digital program such as at the library, Neighbourhood House or community group.

People in the TasCOSS consultations said they only find out about digital learning programs by chance, when they visit the library for something else and see a flyer. Awareness of programs tends to spread by word-of-mouth.

Participants in the 2016 Active Ageing consultation focus groups, particularly those in rural areas, often said that there were no digital learning opportunities in their area that were affordable. However, the majority of libraries and Neighbourhood Houses provide at least free Wifi and staff support to get online or conduct small tasks, with many also offering free or low cost classes or one-on-one support. This suggests that people are unaware of the programs offered in their area, rather than a lack of available programs.

Digital technology can be frustrating.

According to the COTA research, older people disengage when digital technology is frustrating and 'doesn't work when it should'.

The main frustration is the constant updates that change the layout of apps and programs and require re-learning. The rapid rate of change in technology means people have to keep learning and never feel 'on top' of technology. They may gain skills, but then have to learn new ones so quickly that they feel they are fighting an uphill battle.

Poor web-design is another frustration in that it tends to assume a certain level of knowledge and rarely takes visual or physical impairment into consideration. When digital technology is not user-friendly or consistent, older people are more likely to disengage. Older people are also hampered by the same challenges as people on low incomes, such as poor accessibility, slow connection, reception dropping out and having to repeat things that have been lost due to lost connectivity.

> **"Constant changes in technology often cause problems, and I then need to call my Mr Fix It and pay to solve the problem."**
>
> **— Female, north, age 41-50**

CASE STUDY

'Barbara' from a Community House in regional Tasmania said that they needed more resources to better support people. She said they would try as much as they could to help people learn skills and use the Internet, but there was no structured time put aside for this and often occurred as people walked in off the street.

Staff would then have to juggle this teaching with their other duties and they would often be interrupted. She said increasing resources, particularly in rural areas, could support Neighbourhood Houses and other community organisations to offer more regular and focussed training.

SOLUTIONS FOR DIGITAL ABILITY

A range of solutions was identified for lifting digital ability in the desktop research and the consultations.

Improving the digital ability of Tasmanians is an area where the State Government could have a significant impact. Increasing awareness of digital programs and resources for organisations to provide greater support to learners could increase the numbers of people accessing digital learning programs in their local area. For older people, in particular, it is important that learning occurs in small group classes with opportunities for targeted support and peer-to-peer learning. A Digital Inclusion Strategy could include offering increased resources to community organisations, including libraries and Neighbourhood Houses, to offer more digital learning programs and better promote their services.

TasCOSS' research found that increasing awareness of programs and digital uses can be a hook for engaging some people who are resistant to technology. These programs should be useful and interesting to the participants and something they enjoy engaging with, rather than necessities like government services. Examples for older people in particular may include Telehealth, tracking energy use (Smart Meters), and exercise apps (for example, Clock Yourself falls prevention/exercise app: **http://clockyourself.com.au**).

One interviewee spoke about how supporting older people to use Telehealth technologies had provided a link for them to engage digitally because it provided a useful purpose to go online and empowered them in their health. Receivers of the Telehealth technology felt empowered by the information that they could receive and recognised the direct benefits of engaging digitally. Once people began to engage and learn digital skills, they began to use digital devices and the Internet for other reasons. This provided an opportunity to engage family and friends to support the person to learn. A Telehealth Help Desk that people could call was very useful for supporting people by providing valuable troubleshooting, group information sessions and peer-to-peer support.

Older people are interested in intergenerational digital learning programs, and a number have been run successfully in Tasmania (for example, Kingston High School's Big Picture program: **https://www.bigpicture.org.au/media-gallery/detail/814/2157**). There was recognition that younger mentors need to have appropriate communication skills and require some level of training to be successful mentors.

Other digital learning programs can be better promoted. The Commonwealth Government initiative "Be Connected — Every Australian Online" aims to empower Australians to thrive in a digital world. This type of program is essential given the growing expectation that consumers have access to, and are able to successfully navigate, a range of online services. This is particularly important in order to engage with government, for example Medicare, Centrelink and the Australian Tax Office.

In its submission to the Regional Telecommunications Review, Telstra stated that it is making efforts to dedicate more resources to its engagement strategies for regional Australia. One example it offered is the establishment of a dedicated call centre team with a specialised knowledge to manage calls from customers located more than 100 kilometres from a Telstra branded store.

To combat the confusion people have about the NBN rollout, and the different options for speeds and data packages available, there is a need for plain English information. One suggested approach is to establish independent advisers to provide support and help to customers, particularly those in regional and remote areas, to help them get connected, stay connected and be confident using technologies that are beneficial to them. The Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia (BIRRR) is one such model. This website is a 'one-stop shop' website with relevant information and links targeted at people in regional and rural Australia. The popularity of the website demonstrates the important role of advocating for and developing digital literacy in regional areas. However, while BIRRR helps people get connected and stay connected, as a volunteer organisation its sustainability and capacity to solve the digital literacy problems across Australia is tested.

Ensuring that those people who remain offline can be connected to government services, businesses and their community is essential. Having face-to-face options will also benefit those who are online, as many Tasmanians value personal connections. Face-to-face options are important for people, whether they are digitally engaged or not.

A list of online programs and resources for digital learning is at **Attachment 2**.

ATTACHMENT 1

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ATTACHMENT 2

ONLINE PROGRAMS & RESOURCES FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

The Good Things Foundation:
https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org.au/home

Digital Springboard:
https://www.digitalspringboard.org.au

InfoXchange: https://www.infoxchange.org/au

BeConnected: https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/

GoDigi: https://www.godigi.org.au/

Tech Savvy Seniors:
https://www.telstra.com.au/tech-savvy-seniors

GCF Global: https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/

U3A online: https://www.u3aonline.org.au/

IN THE COMMUNITY

Lively (Victoria): https://lively.org.au/ — an intergenerational program in which young jobseekers help teach older people to use technology. This provides younger people with valuable experience and connection, and helps to increase skills and reduce isolation of older people.

Tasmanian Libraries have free Wifi and computer access as well as formal digital learning programs and one-on-one volunteer support.

Tasmanian Neighbourhood and Community Houses provide free Wifi and computer access, with staff providing informal support if they can and have the time.

A range of Tasmanian community groups provide digital training:

- Mathers House: free and low cost digital training, one-on-one and small group
- School for Seniors/U3A's across Tasmania
- OPEN Computing
  (Older Persons Electronic Network; Launceston)

COTA has region-specific details for older Tasmanians in its Digital Information flyers: http://www.cotatas.org.au/programs-events/liveable_communities/digital-programs-in-tasmania/

TELSTRA PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Telstra offers a range of programs including:

- 'Access for Everyone' – helps people on low income or facing financial hardship to stay connected, including through home line rental relief, rebates on Telstra bills, and distribution of calling cards. Through this program they assist around one million customers every month.
- Digital capability programs build technology skills and confidence needed to connect, participate and interact safely in the digital world. Delivered in partnership with the NSW, Victoria and Queensland state governments, since 2014 more than 135,000 people have received face to face training through the program.
- *Telstra Safe Connections* provides women impacted by domestic violence with access to a new Smartphone, pre-paid credit ($30) and information on the safe use of technology. The phones are distributed through WESNET agencies across the country.
- 'Telstra Digital Ambassadors' - Telstra employees volunteer their time to deliver simple coaching for older Australians who have minimal or no digital literacy skills.

OUR VISION: One Tasmania, free of poverty and inequality where everyone has the same opportunity.

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COMPASSION
INFLUENCE

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