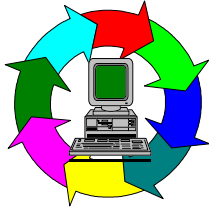**Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc**.
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INQUIRY INTO ISSUES SPECIFIC TO WORKERS OVER 45 YEARS OF AGE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT, OR ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS, FOLLOWING UNEMPLOYMENT

This submission is made on behalf of the

Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc.

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This submission gives a brief overview of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc. It includes information about its clubs and the methods used to help seniors explore the satisfaction and benefits of using computer technology.

It looks at how older people learn and expresses the opinion that older people prefer to learn from their peers, decide what they want to learn and need to learn at their own pace.

Learning is a life-long experience and if a senior is motivated to use a computer and seeks the support and encouragement of peers at a Computer Club for Seniors that person is likely to succeed.

SUMMARY

1. The Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc. (ASCCA) is a non-profit, incorporated organisation linking Computer Clubs for Seniors. It provides a channel for communication between like minded people who want to share in the potential of the computer age to serve their individual and community goals.p2

2. The prime objectives of ASCCA clubs is to teach seniors to use and enjoy computer technology. Each club has a number of members who act as trainers. The important difference in this learning style is that most older people prefer to be taught by their peers, they want to learn specific things and not undertake a course of information that may or may not be of use to them. Most of all they want to learn at their own pace. p3

3. There have been three major initiatives. New Clubs Development, the 2nd Australian Computer Seminar for Seniors, and, the ongoing promotion of the value of computer technology for seniors. p3

4. ASCCA is receiving enquiries from people living in many parts of Australia seeking computer clubs in their own areas. p3

5. A Development Kit has been produced as a resource and useful tool to be used as a blueprint to start a computer club for seniors. It may be as an incorporated community group or as a group within an organisation such as a Senior Citizens Centre, a Probus club, the U3A, or as an activity in a Retirement Village. p4

6. The 2nd Computer Seminar for Seniors was designed specifically for seniors by seniors. A series of concurrent sessions were offered so that participants could select the sessions they attended either by interest or level of computer literacy. The organising committee found it very difficult to interest corporate participation in the small trade display section of the seminar. p5

7. Training in the clubs is usually on a one to one, to a one to three basis. Some clubs also offer small classes as an option on specific software programmes. Several clubs have also developed special interest groups such as family history or graphics. p11

8. ASCCA often provides speakers for a variety of organisation on the topic of Technology and the Older Person. On several occasions the speaker has been approached by a member of the audience who has told of going to a TAFE or Community College course and dropped out feeling that they were completely inadequate and quite unable to learn how to use a computer. Even worse they had resolved never to try again. After hearing that seniors often learn differently these people have decided to try again but this time at a club specifically set up to help seniors learn about computers. p15

9. ASCCA is aware that many seniors do successfully complete TAFE and Community College courses and enjoy the experience. By necessity these courses have a set curriculum and a time frame in which to teach all that is included in the curriculum. This does not cater for the senior who is not able to cope with the speed of the presentation; who finds it difficult to put their question into words and be quick enough to take advantage of the time that tutor has to take questions; can not absorb the variety of information being given. They quickly fall behind, their self esteem plummets, and they withdraw feeling defeated. p15

10. ASCCA now has 25 financial clubs, membership ranges from clubs with from 50 to 300 members and organisations with some 2000 members. We also maintain links with other computer clubs such as Gold Coast Seniors on the Net, Brisbane PCUG, etc. ASCCA continues to keep in touch with clubs that they have helped form or encourage including Palmwoods Retirement Village, Q'ld, and the computer group auspiced by Geelong U3A. We estimate that ASCCA now reaches some 10,000 seniors. p19

AUSTRALIAN SENIORS COMPUTER CLUBS ASSOCIATION INC
AN OVERVIEW

Computer technology is creeping into almost every aspect of life and Seniors are finding it necessary to explore and use this medium of communication. Those living in rural and isolated areas are realising that they have to depend more and more upon technology for everyday needs; older people separated from family and friends are using the Internet to maintain close links with them; while many with a disability are revelling in new found options opened up for them by computer technology. By mastering the use of simple computer technology older people are finding their general well being and independence strengthened. Communication is vitally important to us all and computer technology offers a level of communication previously unknown in the world.

Computer Clubs for Seniors have developed mainly during the last decade. Existing Clubs were invited to attend a meeting held on 1 May 1998 to discuss the advantages of forming an umbrella organisation to link computer clubs for seniors. At this meeting it was resolved that:

i. an umbrella organisation be established
ii. a steering committee be formed
iii. a seminar be held during 1999. The Seminar would be the Associations major activity to mark 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, and that
iv. the website, www.interweb.com.au/snug be developed and maintained.

The steering committee was elected to draw up a constitution, investigate insurance, propose a fee structure, and prepare the fledgling organisation for incorporation.

The committee completed its assigned tasks and a general meeting of interested clubs and organisations was held on 7 August 1998 in the boardroom of the Council on the Ageing, Sydney.

The meeting resolved that the association be known as the **Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc.** (ASCCA) and an executive was elected.

The Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc. (ASCCA) is a non-profit organisation linking Computer Clubs for Seniors. It provides a channel for communication between like minded people who want to share in the potential of the computer age to serve their individual and community goals.

ASCCA became an Incorporated Association on 14 August 1998.

Membership of ASCCA is open to all Computer Clubs for Seniors, Organisations with a membership of seniors, and Organisations that recognise the value of computer technology for seniors. Cost of Membership is $100 per year.

ASCCA advises and supports existing clubs and helps with the establishment of new clubs. It liaises with the three spheres of Government and with other organisations on behalf of the membership; organises seminars, workshops and like activities and seeks out

discounts for members. It has become a catalyst to enthuse, encourage, empower and assist seniors to explore the satisfaction and advantages of using computer technology.

Through ASCCA the computer clubs for seniors are :

- **Encouraging** seniors and people with disabilities to explore the advantages and satisfaction of using computer technology
- **Empowering** seniors and people with disabilities by providing learning opportunities
- **Expanding** communication opportunities
- **Encouraging** options to enable seniors and people with disabilities to enhance their lifestyle
- **Assisting** seniors and people with disabilities in the development of skills to enhance participation in community activities
- **Helping to Bridge the Gap** between the generations through the use of computer technology, and
- **Increasing** self esteem and independence.

The prime objectives of our clubs is to teach seniors to use and enjoy computer technology. Each club has a number of members who act as tutors or trainers. The important difference in this learning style is that most older people prefer to be taught by people of a similar age, they want to learn specific things and not undertake a course of information that may or may not be of use to them. Most of all they want to learn at their own pace.

Seniors can be hesitant to attempt to use computer technology, they can be plagued by negative thoughts - will I be able to do it - could I make a fool of myself. Computer Clubs for Seniors provide an excellent solution - they provide a friendly and non threatening environment. The new member gains confidence in using a computer and in using the programmes on the club's computers. The club can even help them to select a computer that meets their needs and is within their price range.

But what has ASCCA achieved during this vital formative year and a bit?

There have been three major initiatives. New Clubs Development, the 2nd Australian Computer Seminar for Seniors, and, the ongoing promotion of the value of computer technology for seniors.

ASCCA is receiving enquiries from people living in many parts of Australia seeking computer clubs in their own areas. A New Clubs Development Policy was approved on 4 December 1998 and a New Clubs Development sub-committee formed to address this great need.

When someone is keen to try and help form a new club we have been providing them with as much assistance as possible. Often we suggest that they should contact the Community Services section of their local Council for advice about a venue and other general support.

We are very aware that this section of Council is always very busy and have produced a Development Kit as a resource and useful tool be used by Council Staff to encourage the development of Computer Clubs for Seniors within their local government area. It may be as an incorporated community group or as a group within an organisation such as a Senior Citizens Centre, a Probus Club, the U3A, or as an activity in a Retirement Village.

The Kit concentrates on establishing an incorporated community group but there is additional information available if a group or activity within another organisation is the preferred format. We also provide a copy of the kit to individuals or groups who want to see a computer club for seniors established in their area and are prepared to act as the driving force to see the establishment of such a club. ASCCA, of course, is anxious to provide as such support and encouragement as possible. One, or sometimes two members of the New Clubs Development sub-committee, will help with the initial public meeting for a new club and attend as guest speaker to enthuse potential new members and explain the advantages of forming a club in their area. We received a Seniors Week '99 Grant of $1800 to enable us to print and distribute the Kit to every Local Government Area in New South Wales during March 1999. Many Councils have written to commend the Kit.

The kit has been most successful and as a result many new clubs have been established or are in the process of planning their first meeting. With the encouragement of Online Australia the kit was launched electronically on Seniors Online Day, on www.onlineseniors.net.au and on ASCCA's website (www.interweb.com.au/snug). The kit can be downloaded in full from both of those sites, or you can click on the contents to view the kit onscreen and then print out any sections that you want. The kit covers all that you need to know to start a computer club for seniors, or actually any other type of community group.

There are currently 25 financial member clubs/organisations. Some 17 other clubs are being developed. ASCCA provides support and encouragement to any group seeking to form a computer club for seniors without the need for that group to become a member of ASCCA. It follows that many clubs that ASCCA has helped to form have as yet not chosen to join the association.

One new club that we are helping to get started will be located in Macksville and hosted by Nyambagha Girrwaa Community Service Centre Inc. It will be for Aboriginal elders living in the Nambucca Valley who are keen to learn how to use computers to enable them to write their family stories. We have been working with them to not only start the club but to organise a session with an Aboriginal person who can give them guidance in researching Aboriginal family history and a further series of sessions on Writing. To say nothing of organising the acquisition of computers and tutors to teach them the basics of computer usage. Word is spreading and two other Aboriginal communities also want a computer club for their seniors.

Finances

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All members of the ASCCA Executive are volunteers. All trainers/tutors at the individual clubs are also volunteers and actually pay to belong to their club.

ASCCA's financial base is reliant on memberships at $100 per annum.

Grants have been successfully sought to help run the Seminar. (1999 seminar received $3000 from N.O.I.E. and $2000 from Ageing & Disability Department. Overall cost of Seminar was approximately $13,000). Most of the cost of the seminar was met by participants fees. The profit from the Seminar of approximately $1100 was used to support the website.

A seniors week '99 grant of $1800 enabled ASCCA to print and distribute the Development Kit to every local government area in New South Wales.

Financial support of $1500 from Online Australia enabled ASCCA to put the Development Kit online.

So far in 2000 we have successfully sought $1240 in sponsorship from e-commerce sites to support our website.

Computer Seminar for Seniors - May 1999

This seminar was designed specifically for seniors by seniors. A series of concurrent sessions were offered so that participants could select the sessions they attended either by interest or level of computer literacy. The organising committee found it very difficult to interest corporate participation in the small trade display section of the seminar. We were advised that the seniors market wasn't worth bothering with. If we could guarantee $30,000 + profit for the day they would consider it!

The Seminar was evaluated and 60% of participants returned the evaluation sheets. Some of the finding are listed below.

What was the best feature of the seminar?

- Exchange of information and ideas
- Chance to meet people from other clubs
- Choice of sessions
- A seminar designed for seniors
- The Internet
- Information and questions in lay terms
- Excellent information
- Creating an awareness of future trends
- The friendly people
- The ready source of information
- The efforts put into the organisation, and the feeling that we as seniors are important
- Being able to ask questions

- Great food for thought - great food too - great format - great people - great value
- Ran very smoothly
- Valuable for a total beginner
- The variety of topics covered
- Demystifying PCs
- Interaction of attendees
- Loved Bronwyn Bishop's opening and meeting her in person
- The performance poetry
- Graphic and multimedia parts
- friendly atmosphere
- Interaction with other people, I consider I made many many new friends today

Was there anything unsatisfactory about the seminar?

- Equipment break down - should have standbys   *
- Some people dominated question time
- Name tags would have been nice
- Stagger morning tea
- More sessions
- Would have liked more handouts
- Could there be more displays
- Shorter speeches - more sessions
- Queuing for morning tea
- Could you start earlier to avoid the 5 o'clock rush
- Speaker on how to buy a computer was "sitting on the fence". Please be bold.
- Its a fairly long day for those with long travel
- Kindergarten standard needed for those who know nothing about computers

* This was indeed the weakness of the day. Two of our major speakers brought their presentations on their own laptop computers and neither computer was working in spite of considerable efforts by the Hotel's Audio Visual person.

Computer use:

Twenty percent of those who completed this question had not used a computer

Future proposed increased computer use by all who completed this question (including those who presently did not use a computer):

The Internet	52%
General use	36%
Financial records	33%
Family history	25%
Community work	13%
Part time work	8%

Recommendations included in Seminar Report

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1. That the seminar be seen as successful and meeting its objectives.
2. That the seminar be repeated again next year at the Menzies or a similar venue
3. That consideration be given to holding an additional seminar or workshop in a Club or similarly lower costing venue to enable those with very limited finances to attend.
4. That individual clubs be encouraged to hold hands-on workshop for beginners.
5. That those organising future seminars or workshops consider carefully the comments made in the evaluation of the 2nd Australian Computer Seminar for Seniors.

The website

ASCCA's website is to be found at **www.interweb.com.au/snug**

The site has been created to bring together Computer clubs for Seniors. It carries a wealth of information including data about Computer clubs for Seniors. There are contribution pages and links to other sites of use and value to Seniors.

When you get to ASCCA's homepage you will find the following options:

History: This gives a brief overview of the formation of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Inc.

Example: A general insight into how one club operates

Current: Activities that are of current general interest

Clubs/Links: Information about member clubs and links to interesting sites

Australian: Additional Australian content

International: Information from overseas

Profile: Brief profiles of the members of the ASCCA Executive

Glossary: An explanation of terms

Development Kit: A full copy of the New Clubs Development Kit, available to read online or to print out in full or part.

Members only: This section is for members only

HOW OLDER PEOPLE LEARN

Who are older people?

Society sees the person before retirement as working and doing something, but considers retirement as leisure time and therefore non productive and doing nothing. There is also a tendency to put people into pigeon holes according to age, thereby isolating them from interaction with other age groups and denying them access to learning.

High value can be placed by society on many of the social characteristics and skills of ageing individuals - wisdom, leadership, experience, accumulation of wealth and accords to those aged persons positions of power and privilege. These are persons who have been seen to have made a 'success' of their lives, and hence it is expected that they will have a successful old age. Unfortunately old age can be a painful experience for those with limited resources and for those whose life chances have been restricted.

Australia is an ageing society. In 1911 (the year of Australia's first census) 4% of people were aged 65 years and over. By 1996, this figure had risen to 12% in New South Wales. (Currently the percentage of older residents in some areas is considerably higher than the average, e.g. Manly Local Government Area has approx. 24% older residents, and Pittwater LGA has 22% older residents.) Australia has one of the highest rates of life expectancy in the world, 75 years for men and 81 years for women. This means that most non Aboriginal people can expect to live another 15-20 active years beyond the 'traditional' retirement age of 60. People are living longer, they are generally remaining healthy and active for longer, and they have access to greater financial resources than previous generations. (*NSW Healthy Ageing Framework 1998-2003*, NSW Gov. 1998)

According to a number of recent studies, more and more people aged 55 and over are using computers and the Internet. Examining the attitudes and practices of older Queenslanders, researchers Margaret Steinberhg and Linda Walley found that while a fair number of older people are not computer literate, most think that computers can be mastered at any age. Steinberg and Walley found that older people who do use a computer enjoy it and feel empowered. (*All Ages News 1,* Official newsletter of IYOP)

- More than 2.3 million people in Australia, 1 million of those are in NSW are aged 60 and over
- Baby boomers are turning 50 at the rate of 700 per day
- By early next century 20% of the population will be over 60
- In just over a decade there will be more people over 60 than under 18
- More than 90% of people aged 60 years and over live in houses and flats, and more than 80% are homeowners. ("General Ageing Facts", *Briefing, IYOP,* Ageing & Disability Dept. 17 June 1998.)

Seniors living in rural areas are realising that they have to depend more and more upon technology for everyday needs. It is with great alarm that communities watch banking facilities withdrawn from their towns and villages. Older people often find it just too hard to travel to the nearest 'big' centre to access banks. Computer technology is the solution for those seniors who are able to access computers. Cabonne Council in New South Wales envisaged a computer solution. They developed a project to establish three cyber cafes strategically placed within the villages of Cabonne Country - a shire of 6,017 square kms with approximately 11,600 residents. Cabonne is an agricultural area with no regional city centre, it is a shire consisting of 8 villages. The project will provide integrated and interactive training, public Internet access and information and introduction to information technology to the village residents and agricultural sector of Cabonne Country. The project officer will give training in surfing the web, email, set up chat havens and give basic training in web design and on line marketing. (Cyber Cafe Proposal, Joy Engleman, Small Towns Development Officer, Cabonne Council 1998.)

Many Older people separated from family and friends are using the Internet to maintain close links with them and many seniors with a disability are reveling in new found options opened up for them by computer technology. They are emailing friends and family across the street or around the world to chat. They are also using the Internet to research and study as well as to bank and pay bills.

Evidence supporting ongoing education for older people is not new!

There is now a wealth of research material by gerontologists available which presents a more optimistic picture of the learning potential of older people. However, much research on this topic has long been available. It seems that the majority of people retain their mental agility with little, if any, decline. A well documented project "Operation Retirement" conducted by Drs. Harwood and Naylor provides both practical and statistical evidence of this potential for learning.   In one experiment they taught 80 people aged from 63 - 91 years (average age 70) to read German. These students had no prior knowledge of the language but after six months of 2 hour weekly sessions, 55 of the original 80 had reached, or exceeded the standard expected of school students after 4 years tuition. (Drs. Harwood and Naylor's 13 year project was called "Operation Retirement", Further information in *Theoretical & Practical Implications of "Educabilty" in the Elderly,* 1974)

Kris Latona, who co-ordinated the Life-Long Learning Project for TAFE in 1986, said that many older people complained to her of memory loss and gave it as a reason for not wanting to learn, and a fear that their memory would prove unreliable. Harwood and Naylor while acknowledging memory loss, say that older people are so convinced that they will have lapses of memory that they attribute all lapses to senile decay, disregarding the fact that young people have similar memory failures. Research points to differences in the best ways for the old and young to learn more efficiently. The older person benefits from a problem solving approach which makes use of years of previous experience, and an approach which accentuates their verbal skills. It could be, then that the classical method of teaching the young, relying on formal instruction and the committing of fact to memory, is an inappropriate teaching

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method for older people. (Latona, Kris *The Life Long Learning Project,* NSW Dept. of TAFE, 1985)

Latona, in her *Opportunities for the Ageing* programme outline, lists the following research findings from a study on brain chemistry by the U.S. National Institute of Ageing:

A. Components of Intelligence which **increase** throughout life

- Crystallised Intelligence: One's accumulated body of general information [used to] make judgments and solve problems
- World Knowledge: Facts from formal education and day to day experience
- Verbal Ability
- Comprehension

B. Components where there may be **losses**

- Fluid Intelligence: Seeing and using abstract patterns, e.g. used in chess playing
- Tasks involving motorskills and speed
- Spontaneous recall and memory

Gerontoligical researchers would appear to agree that memory loss is more feared than real, and that healthy individuals who use any of their abilities are more likely to retain them. As we polish up our verbal skills daily most people, therefore, improve their verbal skills.

Some so called 'intellectual' losses are really hearing or vision loses. Generally there is a tendency to think that physically impaired people are also mentally impaired. Some of the physical losses of age are equated with mental decline, but Latona argues that "The healthy age brain is as active and efficient as the healthy young brain." (Study on Brain Chemistry, US National Institute of Ageing as quoted by Latona in *Opportunities for the Ageing* Programme, 1985 p.2)

Evidence strongly suggests that economic, social and political trends will lead to an even stronger demand for education for older people in the future. The population is ageing resulting in a greater number of retirees. The amount of individual leisure time is increasing and there is a growing community awareness of the benefits of continuing education.

<center>**COMPUTER CLUBS FOR SENIORS.**</center>

Computer clubs for seniors are helping to meet the needs of seniors who want to know more about computers..

Clubs have a variety of software installed on their computers to suit the needs and interests of their members and include word processing, spreadsheets, data bases, desk top publishing, graphics, financial packages etc. Established clubs are linked to the Internet.

Clubs usually have a monthly meeting where guest speakers are invited to demonstrate new software or hardware, introduce a website such ass their local council's website, or explain how to use ATMs, EFTPOS, phone banking or the Internet for banking

Clubs provide a non-threatening and friendly environment where seniors can learn from seniors. They can learn what they choose to learn and they can learn at their own pace.

Trainers in computer clubs are volunteers who pay to belong to the club. Some clubs do waive term fees for trainers.

Training in the clubs is usually on a one to one, to a one to three basis. Some clubs also offer small classes as an option on specific software programmes. Several clubs have also developed special interest groups such as family history or graphics. Those participating in special interest groups usually has some basic computer knowledge and find the small group excellent for learning and interaction.

Most clubs have adopted a training policy. A sample of such a policy follows:

<center>**COMPUTER PALS FOR SENIORS, NORTHERN BEACHES Inc.**
TRAINING POLICY</center>

<center>**Training Objectives**</center>

For Members:

1. To encourage members to explore the advantages and satisfaction of using computer technology
2. To empower members by providing learning opportunities
3. To provide learning opportunities in a manner appropriate to the individual needs of members

For Trainers :

1. To encourage trainers to explore the advantages and satisfaction of using computer technology
2. To encourage trainers to make use of the principles of adult education
3. To encourage the sharing of skills and knowledge

4. To promote the enhancement of skills and knowledge

Principles of Adult Education

Adult education, or learning, can be considered in four areas:
- **i.** Tutor characteristics
- **ii.** Appropriate teaching methods
- **iii.** Adult learner characteristics
- **iv.** Learning environment.

Tutor Characteristics

Effective adult learning is enhanced if the tutor follows the following guidelines:

1. Gives support, and can cope with individual personalities
2. Is enthusiastic, and knowledgeable, about his/her subject
3. Is prepared to learn as well as to teach
4. Is imaginative and has a sense of humour
5. Can think on his/her feet and is relaxed and confident in teaching

Appropriate teaching methods

1. Teaching methods should be selected while keeping in mind the members reasons for learning, abilities and previous experience.
2. Members should take a role in deciding what will be learned, and the time frame
3. Methods used should be appropriate to the objectives and motivation of members and at their own pace
4. "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand"!
5. A non threatening and supportive atmosphere should be created

Adult learner characteristics

1. The characteristics of adult learners can be reflective of their independence and wealth of experience
2. Motivation for learning can be related to family, personal interest, personal crisis, or work
3. Age can influence self esteem and confidence - few want to run the risk of looking a fool or being a failure
4. Adult learners need a variety of teaching approaches
5. If a session or class is not meeting a member's expectations, if there are insufficient payoffs or if there are conflicting options a member has the opportunity of "voting with his/her feet" - attendance is not compulsory.

Learning environment

1. A learning environment should be comfortable and conducive to learning
2. It should be accessible and barriers to participation should be removed.

3. Barriers to participation can include lack of mobility, hearing impairment and poor eyesight.

Trainer Support

1. Regular trainers' meetings should be held, and all trainers encouraged to attend
2. All trainers should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the club through the training process
3. It is expected that trainers should all be prepared to teach members what they want to know, if it is within their range of skills, and not impose their preferences upon them. However, other options can be suggested.
4. A training Co-ordinator should be appointed to co-ordinate training.
5. An equipment Co-ordinator should be appointed to co-ordinate the club's hardware and software.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM A CLUB BROCHURE TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF HOW MANY CLUBS OPERATE.

MEMBERS' INFORMATION BROCHURE

WHO WE ARE

Computer Pals for Seniors - Northern Beaches is one of a popular and expanding network of similar computer clubs in Australia. The principal aim of the Club is to assist its members in learning how to use a computer and to help members gain an understanding of computers. Assistance is given by people of your own age usually on a one-to-one to one-to-three basis. There is no feeling of being pressured as there might be with formal computer classes. You learn what you choose to learn and at your own pace.

Computer Pals is a members club, a non-profit organisation run by its members. All pay to belong including trainers and our committee. We are all volunteers.

TRAINING

Club trainers are rostered to assist you from Mondays to Fridays inclusive (except on public holidays and during the summer break from late December to early January). At present, to be fair to our members, only one training session per person per week can be scheduled beginning and ending on the hour.

It is worthwhile discussing your level of experience and what you wish to do with a computer, this will assist us to suggest the most suitable trainer. If you already have a certain level of skill and as your confidence grows you could think about becoming a trainer.

MEETINGS

A monthly meeting for all members is held at 2.00 pm on the third Thursday of each month. They usually include an address on a computer related topic given by a guest speaker. These meetings help to increase our understanding of computers and their potential uses. There is an opportunity for members to discuss any matters concerning the club. The meeting concludes with tea and coffee.

LIBRARY & NEWSLETTER

The Club has a growing library including manuals. Some items may be borrowed for up to a two week period. A newsletter is produced each month containing condensed committee meeting minutes, computer information, and a calendar of future activities.

HOW TO JOIN

If you feel that the Club can help you please complete the application form and together with the $20 membership fee plus $20.00 to cover the first calendar quarter lodge these with the duty trainer. Quarterly fees are due on the 1st day of January, April, July and October. If you choose to pay for a year's membership in advance then a $20.00 discount applies.

WHY DO SENIORS COME TO COMPUTER CLUBS?

Many arrive at a club and confess that son or daughter has just bought a new computer and has given them the old one. They hasten to add that the son or daughter is extremely clever but very busy and they haven't had time to show them how to work the computer. Usually expressing the reassuring comment to their parent that it is quite easy and that they should have no trouble. After a pause the senior quietly asks "Could you show me how to turn it on?"

Yet others come to a club because their family has encouraged them to 'go and do something about learning to use a computer'. However, they don't even know if they want to use a computer! The clubs assure them that they can learn to use a computer at the club to find out for themselves if they want to become a computer user.

Seniors who have recently retired and have had some computer experience in the workplace join because they want to extend the perimeters of their knowledge and learn how to use a computer for their own purposes.

It is pleasing to note that the computer skills gained by seniors are often used to enable them to participate in other community groups, e.g. as Secretary, Treasurer etc. Yet others use their new skills to take up work, usually part time and very often in a family business.

The Internet draws other seniors to a club. Some want to be able to keep in touch with friends and families. Yet others want to learn how to use the Internet to shop, chat, research, buy and sell shares, and pay bills.

There are many seniors who want to learn about computers and have enrolled in a TAFE course or a Community College but found the experience unsatisfactory.   So when they hear about a club from friends or read about a club in a local paper some of these people will come to see if it is possible after all to learn about computers.

ASCCA often provides speakers for a variety of organisations on the topic of Technology and the older person. On several occasions the speaker has been approached by a member of the audience who has told of going to a TAFE or Community College course and dropped out feeling that they were completely inadequate and quite unable to learn how to use a computer. Even worse they had resolved never to try again. After hearing that seniors generally learn differently these people has decided to try again but this time in a club specifically set up to help seniors learn about computer technology.

ASCCA is aware that many seniors do successfully complete TAFE and Community College courses and enjoy the experience. By necessity these courses have a set curriculum and a time frame in which to teach all that is included in the curriculum. This does not cater for the senior who is not able to cope with the speed of the presentation; finds it difficult to put their question into words and be quick enough to

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take advantage of the time the tutor has to take questions; can absorb the variety of information being given. They quickly fall behind, their self esteem has plummeted, and they withdraw feeling defeated.

All people are individuals and have different levels of education, adaptability, hearing and vision so even a class containing only seniors can present all of the above problems too.

Cost is another major factor disadvantaging seniors on limited fixed incomes. Courses offered specifically for seniors or discounts offered in general classes still make the cost too high for some seniors.

Age is certainly no barrier. One lady decided at the age of 93 that she would like to write her memoirs and she decided to learn how to use a computer to help her achieve her objective. She is now 96 and has published two volumes of her memoirs!

Another lady, aged 84, wrote to *the Australian* complaining that no-one had offered to teach her how to use a computer. One of our club members saw the letter and passed it on to the club nearest to where the writer lived. She was invited to join the club, did so and now delights in the work she can prepare using her computer for her local CWA group. She has been heard to say:

> You know, when I visit my friends in hostels and even nursing homes, instead of glumly contemplating my future entry, I look about to see where my computer will fit, and think happily of all the time I'll have available to work on it.

Learning is a life-long experience and if a senior is motivated to use a computer and seek the support and encouragement of peers at a Computer Club for Seniors that person s likely to succeed.

HAS ASCCA TRIED TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF SENIORS OUTSIDE THE CLUB ENVIRONMENT?

When the NSW Healthy Ageing Framework was published it was noted that that during 1999 The Hon. John Aquilina, MP planned to :

> develop and/or review computer and other technology training programs to improve their access and relevance to older people.

ASCCA further discovered that TAFE and Community/Evening Colleges would be the vehicle used to deliver any new programmes. ASCCA wrote to the Minister on 3/11/98, and I quote part of that letter:

> … Computer clubs for Seniors provide older people and those with a disability with the opportunity to learn how to use computer technology. Each club has a number of members who act as tutors. It usually ranges from a one to one, to a one to three, learning opportunity for members who are taught the aspects of computer technology that they wish to learn. The important difference in this learning style is that older people prefer to be taught by people of a similar age, they want to learn specific things and not undertake a course of information that may or may not be of use to the and most of all they want to learn at their own pace. Once they have learned the basics and feel confident they may then choose to undertake a course but most seem ore comfortable learning with their peers.

> …our Association would like to be involved in the process you plan to use for the development or review of these programs.

A response from the Minister's office led to a meeting in early February 1999 with Ms. Amanda Moore of the NSW Board of Adult & Community Education.   BACE was quite interested in the suggestion that Community Colleges could auspice computer clubs for seniors and information was given about ASCCA's development plan. ASCCA has not been advised of any further developments in this regard.

ASCCA CLUBS

ASCCA now has 25 financial clubs, membership ranges from clubs with from 40 to 300 members and organisations with some 2000 members. We also maintain links with other computer clubs such as Gold Coast Seniors on the Net, Brisbane PCUG, etc. ASCCA continues to keep in touch with clubs that they have helped form or encouraged include Palmwoods Retirement Village, Q'ld, and the computer group auspiced by Geelong U3A. We estimate that ASCCA now reaches some 10,000 seniors.

A list of member clubs and steering committees that are about to become stand alone clubs follows:

Club	member of ASCCA
Anglican Retirement Villages, Castle Hill	yes
Armidale #	
Avalon Computer Pals for Seniors #	
Bayview Gardens Computer Club	yes
Computer Pals for Seniors **Bankstown**	yes
Belrose #	
Computer Pals for Seniors **Eastern Suburbs**	yes
Computer Pals for Seniors **Galston** & District	yes
Glen Innes #	
Computer Pals for Seniors **Holroyd** Inc.	yes
Kogarah Seniors Computer Club Inc.	yes
Leichhardt (LUCAN CARE)	yes
CPS **Manly** Inc	yes
CPS **Marrickville** District Inc	yes
CPS **Northern Beaches** Inc.	yes
RSL Veterans Computer Group (**Retirement Village, Collaroy Plateau)**	yes

Willandra Village Computer Pals (Beacon Hill)	*yes
CPS **The Hills** Inc (Castle Hill)	yes
Endeavour Seniors Computer Club Inc (Gymea)	**yes**
Forest Computer Pals for Seniors Inc. (Forestville)	yes
Greenwich/Lane Cove Computer Pals Inc.	yes
Hawkesbury Seniors Computer Group (Richmond)	yes
Hurstville Seniors Computer Club Inc.	yes
Linking **TASMANIAN** Seniors	yes
Long Jetty Senior Citizens Computer Activity	yes
Moocooboola Computer Club for Seniors Inc. (Hunters Hill)	yes
Seniors Computer Club **Central Coast Inc**	yes
Seniors Computer Club **Mosman**	
Sydney PCUG	yes
Sydney U3A	yes
Wollongong	
Wyong District Seniors Computer Club	yes

*   sub groups
\#   steering committee

For information about starting a new club or for information about new clubs starting in your area, please contact:
Nan Bosler, (02) 9971 5981 or Wal Anderson (02) 9451 1673

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS PLANNED BY ASCCA

1. Computer Clubs for Seniors provide not only an opportunity to learn they also offer the option of sharing their knowledge and skill with others. Happily seniors with computer skills usually join the new clubs but one of the problems confronting some new clubs is in finding sufficient, suitable trainers. ASCCA is developing a training programme to help train at least two potential trainers from each club. These two seniors would then assist others to take on the role of trainer.

2. Many clubs have a membership encompassing several language groups. ASCCA has become aware that in some instances potential members from non English speaking background are not literate in their own languages. ASCCA would like to develop a plan to use computer technology as a means of teaching these seniors English.

3. Literacy is not a problem only for people from NESBs, it is a problem also for many older Australians and needs to be addressed as part of the process of teaching these seniors to use a computer.

4. ASCCA is already helping two Aboriginal community to establish computer clubs. These clubs will foster the recording of the members family histories and the use of computers to prepare their stories by learning desk top publishing. It will be important for the self esteem of members and give them additional skills to enhance working opportunities.

5. ASCCA would also like to further develop a small project which is currently beginning to link people from isolated rural areas with a trainer who will help them via email. ASCCA also advises these seniors of the opportunities available through Isolated Bytes a programme run by U3A. ASCCA already has as a member Linking Tasmanian Seniors Inc. and this group already caters for some 300 seniors scattered all over Tasmania.

6. ASCCA quickly observed the barriers to participation being incurred by some residents in retirement villages - sometimes lack of transport and sometimes lack of mobility. Several ASCCA clubs have been set up in retirement villages and ASCCA is keen to further expand this option for the residents of retirement complexes. This objective fits neatly into the requirements for Accreditation by such facilities.

Concerns for equity for older people & those with a disability

Cost of software, hardware and the use of the Internet is a big factor preventing many seniors on limited fixed incomes from embracing the computer age.

Considerable work has been done to ensure that schools have adequate hardware, software and that they are connected to the Internet. Surplus Commonwealth IT equipment is often distributed to schools. This is commendable and essential if we are going to prepare school students of to-day to be the adults, and leaders of tomorrow.

The Federal Government, in its "A Strategic Framework for the Information Economy" released in December 1998, has made a commitment to ensuring that all Australians enjoy the social and economic benefits offered by the information economy.

Rural and remote areas have been focused upon in order to improve Internet access but a lack of infrastructure, poor telephone lines and high call costs still put those communities a long way behind their city cousins.

Steve Burrell in an article "The great digital divide" published in the Sydney Morning Herald dated 23 February 2000 states that "those on higher incomes are leaving the poor behind." Household on $150,000 a year or more are almost 11 times more likely to be connected to the Net than those on less than $20,000!

Statistics would appear to categorise those who have an annual income of less that $20,000, have lower educational levels and are aged over 55 years as being less likely to be able to participate in an Information Technology dominated world.

Ford Australia is likely to follow the lead given by Ford in the USA and provide employees with computer technology and access to the Internet for $5 per month. The Unions have also been involved in a major initiative to narrow the gap between the information rich and the information poor. (Burrell) What is being offered to seniors?

Surplus Commonwealth IT equipment that is not needed in the schools should be directed to older Australians who can not afford to purchase even a second hand computer. New computer clubs for seniors would also benefit from access to computer hardware no longer needed by Government departments or Corporate bodies. There is the need to be able to access programmes such as Windows 95, Windows 98 at an inexpensive rate to load onto these machines.

Senior computer users frequently delay connecting to the Internet because they are afraid of the cost. This cost includes the cost of the phone call to connect, plus the cost charged by the ISP.

The Federal Government, … has made a commitment to ensuring that all Australians enjoy the social and economic benefits offered by the information economy. All Australians surely include seniors.

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