JULIE McCROSSIN: Do you mind standing on this side of me? What we're going to do, in a surprisingly snappy way, is communicate to you about the Australian Digital Inclusion Index and its latest iteration. I'm going to - are you hot to trot?

JULIAN THOMAS: Ready to go.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Absolutely. Why is this so bloody important?

JULIAN THOMAS: It's important because, as we know, we've got around 3 million Australians who are still not online. The digital divide is a real problem. It's not going away. It's not reducing. It's becoming more of a problem. I think we've heard a lot about that today. So we need to know something about this. The Digital Inclusion Index is kind of based on the idea that, if we know something about that, if we've got some evidence, we can do something about it. That's why it matters, Julie.

JULIE McCROSSIN: What I want to show you is an incredible trick. Wayne, will you please watch Professor Julian Thomas? If your right arm goes up, Wayne will click onto the next slide. Do you want to give it a go? Slight delay, but we accept that! There's a bit of fibre-to-node distance. It's going to get quicker.

(LAUGHTER)

Come up a little bit. At any point you want to, you know, Wayne to click on, go for it.

JULIAN THOMAS: OK.

JULIE McCROSSIN: What is this, and what is it telling us?

JULIAN THOMAS: This is a picture of an internet in Australia which is not inclusive, but stratified. You can see there are huge gaps in digital inclusion between people who are in higher-income and lower-income households, older Australians and younger Australians, more- and less-educated Australians, and other groups. This is the picture of who is included and who is not. As you can see, it's a deeply and profoundly stratified story, rather than an image of an inclusive internet, which is what we'd like to see.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Great. What does this tells us?

JULIAN THOMAS: This tells you what's going on with digital inclusion in Australia over the last few years. We've been collecting data since 2013. So what this shows us is what's happening. When we talk about digital inclusion, we divide it up into several key elements. We talk about access. We talk about affordability. And we talk about digital ability. We talk about what people actually do online. And so what this image shows you is what's been going on. This is what we're really concerned about. Because although access and various measures of how much data people have, how many devices they have, the sorts of connections they have - that's all been tracking upwards relatively predictably and nicely. But what we can see with digital ability is it's pretty flat. So what we can actually do online - the sorts of skills we have - it's not really improving, not following. And on the affordability side of things, you can see we've got big problems. It's going backwards or it's flat. So that's a real area of concern. That shows you what's been going on in this area in the last four or five years.

JULIE McCROSSIN: I'll race you. Ready?

JULIAN THOMAS: So this is another way of looking at that story of what's been happening. A gap - this is the gap in digital inclusion between our highest quintile, our highest-income households, and our lowest-income households. You can see that gap has been increasing. It's not narrowing.

JULIE McCROSSIN: He beat me.

JULIAN THOMAS: Same story with age, as you can see here. Again, this is a real area of concern. The gap between older Australians - in this case, the 65-plus group - and the younger cohort is not narrowing. So it's something we've really got to do something about. Beat you again.

(LAUGHTER)

What do you want me to say about this one?

JULIE McCROSSIN: I feel like - Peabody! I don't have enough arms. Would you pour a glass of water for my learned friend? This is something that most people can't read, and so you're going to tell me the three key messages to take away from this regional photo.

JULIAN THOMAS: Well, one of the things we can do with the Digital Inclusion Index is look in a little more detail at what's going on in different parts of the country.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Look after yourself, and then we'll look after you. By the way, a lot of Australian rivers don't look that good, I'll just throw that in!

JULIAN THOMAS: That's absolutely right. But in this case, that river is also a digital divide. And I thought it might be interesting because it sort of shows, at a local level, just how big some of the gaps can be. So that's the Murray River. And that separates NSW and Victoria - the place you mentioned earlier - where I do come from, on this occasion. So there's the gap there. But it's also a digital divide, because one of the things our index shows is that, if you live on the north side of that river, you're likely to have a significantly higher level of digital inclusion than if you live on the south side. So this is the sort of example of some of the variations that we can sort of see across the country and what is going on there. I'm sorry you can't read the numbers, but what it shows you is that, if you're looking a little bit at detail, at what the difference is between north-eastern Victoria and the Murray and Murrumbidgee region of NSW, is that there's a huge gap in terms of the affordability of internet services. So people at a fairly similar place in terms of access there, in terms of what they can actually do online, but because of economic and social differences between these regions, people on the south side of that digital divide we call the Murray River are actually able to do much less, and their measure of affordability is way down on the rest of the country's.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Presumably this shows the need not only for research, but for granulated data, so people involved in policy know exactly what's going on.

JULIAN THOMAS: Exactly. It's the kind of data we think is helpful at a local, state and national level to show us where we need to do things, what sorts of things we do, what kinds of problems we're encountering, what kind of opportunities there might be for useful interventions in this area.

JULIE McCROSSIN: If we fling our hands up, there any more images?

JULIAN THOMAS: There are no more images. That is the last image.

JULIE McCROSSIN: How would people get access to this?

JULIAN THOMAS: Go to the website - Google it. You'll find it. I think you've also got copies of the report in your bags, so... ..just check it out. And get in touch, if you want to know any more.

JULIE McCROSSIN: My name's Julie, and his name's Julian. Isn't that nice? Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)