# ACCANect 2018

**Session 15: 2:30 – 3:00pm**

**The Be Connected Project**

**Presenter: Jess Wilson, National Director, Good Things Foundation**

**Be Connected is a new Australian Government program aimed at increasing the confidence, skills and online safety of older Australians when they use the internet. This session will discuss the Project and look at the research behind the issues and barriers faced by older Australians online.**

JULIE McCROSSIN: Could I invite Jess Wilson to come into the chat pit of

fun. Jess is the national director of the Good Things Foundation and

she's going to talk about the Be Connected Project for older

Australians. Please welcome, Jess Wilson.

JESS WILSON: It's Jess following another Jess. I'd like to

acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet

you all for being here and for the amazing conversations I've

already had and the presentations we've heard today. It's been

such a fantastic day so thanks Teresa for inviting me to be here to

be part of this. I am talking about The Be Connected Project

program, but I'm not sure too many people know who Good Things

Foundation is. Good Things Foundation is a social change charity

and we have been in the UK for about 12 years and we're all about

making change for the good, in digital and social inclusion. So far

we've supported over 2 million people in the UK to learn new digital

skills and to improve their lives through digital. But just over a year

ago, we came to Australia and that was to run The Be Connected

Project. In Australia we celebrated our birthday on 3 August. I was

excited to look at how much we've managed to achieve in that time.

So far we have 12 new staff. We had nobody this time last year, so

that was pretty exciting. We've actually supported over 34,000

learners across the country throughout our community network. We

have 1700 - in fact, that slide is wrong now - we have 1800 network

partners so that's community organisations across the country who

are supporting us to support older people. We've done a whole lot

of webinars and face-to-face events. Similar to what Infoxchange is

doing with the digital springboard program we're focused on making

sure as many older people in the country are able to access the

support to develop their digital skills. So as Jess said, 2.5 people

are not online in Australia and the significant number of those

people, in fact the people that are the least likely to be included in

the digital world are people who are over 50. Actually, over 65, but

older Australians. This is the Australian Digital Inclusion Index. It's

fantastic to have Chris Wilson here who's worked on the Australian

digital inclusion index and we're diving deeper into the data around

this at the moment. But this is looking at where people sit on the

digital inclusion index. Now you can see that the lowest people, the

lowest ones on this chart are people who are on the lowest income

quintile, so people who don't earn very much money and people

who are 65 plus. So there is a significant issue around people not

being able to access the important benefits that being online and

using technology has. But this is not just the only story. I thought

rather than talk a bit more about the Australian digital inclusion

index I could talk to you further about some of the other research

going on about why people are not online who are over 65. So this

is actually research done by our partners the office of the E-Safety

Commissioner and this is really looking at older Australians and

digital confidence and one of the major reasons why people over 65

are not online is that they're not confident to do so, that they're

feeling like they're really not 100 per cent sure why they would be

going online and they don't really know how to do it. If you look in

the research by the E-Safety Commissioner, 23 per cent of people

50 to 69 had low or no digital skills at all. So low or no digital skills.

People who are 70 plus, 57 per cent had low to no digital skills. So

actually people's levels of skill actually decreases as they get older

and so there's a real importance for us to support people in that

way. That means they're actually missing out on some of those

benefits that are part of the digital world. Of this research, 53 per

cent of people had never tried taking or sending a photo with

a Smartphone. So that's one of the things that happens all over the

world today. They did not - 51 per cent had never tried to install an

app on a phone or on a device and so that's just a little taste of the

things that people are not then able to do. The reason why a lot of

people who are older are not going online is because a lot of the

things we've been talking about this morning and that's really

because their fear of technology and of getting scammed. I know

Julie was talking about some of their friends engaged in the online

world significantly and yet have been scammed and so this is a real

fear. It's not actually something that is made up. It is actually

a fear of being online because they might get scammed or be

affected by that. So that's a significant reason why people are not

getting online. But actually, a lot of people are saying that they do

want to. So a lot of older people are saying that they do want to

get online, it's just that they want to be supported to do that. So

they want to have face-to-face connection. They want to have

people who are there to be able to support them so manage the

digital world, to go "Why is this happening? Why is there a pop-up

there? I don't know what that is", and being able to resolve that

issue as it comes up. NBN's recently just done some research as

well and that research actually says that of those people that have

the NBN - now I know there's a lot of talk about NBN this morning

and whether it's actually going to be useful to a lot of people in the

longer term - but for people over 65 there's actually a significant

increase in people accessing non-formal learning. People who are

not on the NBN compared to people that are on the NBN. So people

over 65 are actually the greatest takers-up of non-formal learning

online when they have access to the NBN. But actually some of the

research we've done in the UK is talking about the fact that there

are a lot of people - and this is a research that we did with the

Centre for Ageing Better in the UK and it was a 2-year project where

we talked to a lot of older people about why they might want to go

online, why they don't and there was a significant, the issue here is

that although a lot of people want to go online, there are a whole lot

of older people who are deciding very clearly and calmly that they're

not interested. They actually don't want to go online. They've

heard the benefits thanks very much and they're making that

decision not to go online, because they don't want to. I can think of

my father-in-law who very clearly had a mobile phone because we

said he should have one, but kept it charged, but in his bathroom

drawer. So didn't actually use it at all, although he would often

make the joke that we should tweet him if we wanted to share some

information with him. But he made that decision very clearly. The

thing is that what happened for those people is that if they had

a bereavement or there was a sudden change in their

circumstances, that actually that was the time that they found that

they should, they really needed to access information. We've got an

experience of that in our network, where a man who had avoided

technology his whole working career. His wife had done all of the

banking and connections with government services unfortunately

she passed away and all of a sudden he had to learn how to access

that information. So I think although people make that decision and

it certainly should be a choice whether people want to be online or

not, there are times when in those transition times when people

start to have to come online, as well. And I think the important

thing is to make sure that there's support available. Now there are

a number of different programmes that support older people and so

I've got a couple up here. The Australian Seniors Computer Clubs

Association have been doing this work for 20 years, supporting

people to use technology in a whole different way. Tech Savvy

Seniors run by Telstra for a number of years through libraries.

Some State governments have supported this and have been rolling

it out and certainly before the Be Connected Program, it's important

that there are a lot of opportunities for people to learn these skills.

But I'm here to talk about The Be Connected Project and it is

a program that is focused on supporting older Australians and yes

"older Australians" do mean people over 50 and that's slightly scary

for a lot of people, including myself, because I'm heading that way,

too. So I think - but what that does mean is that it's a broad range

of people that we can support. It's an Australian

Government-funded program and it's a significant amount of

funding that's been invested into this program over three years to

2020 and it is close to $50 million that's being invested in that time.

We are delivering this in partnership with the office of the E-Safety

Commissioner. I know she's coming this afternoon, so it will be

great to have Julie here and with the Department of Human Services

and there's four parts to this program. There's a brand and

awareness campaign that is coming probably some time next year

to help tell people it's important to get online. There is a fantastic

learning portal which I'll show you that is operated by the office of

the E-Safety Commissioner and there is a national network of

community organisations and that's what Good Things Foundation is

responsible for, is to build that network, to support them and to

provide them with the resources to do that and as part of that

there's a grants program. There's $20 million worth of funding we

are administering to provide community organisations with support

to get these programmes started. So this is just a picture of the

learning platform that's available and that's been developed by the

office of the E-Safety Commissioner. It's a really interesting

program. There are free courses on there, they're freely available,

you can go online to check them out. There's a topic library that

has everything from how to use a computer and, in fact, how to use

a computer is the number one topic that is used on that website so

it's actually really focused on those very basic skills for people who

are not engaged in the online world yet. It also has a whole lot of

webinars that the office of the E-Safety Commissioner are running

as well, because we know people are scared about e-safety so

there's opportunities for people to learn how to do this really safely

and to acknowledge things. But what we know is that it's actually

about people. So as Jess said, people like people. You know, it's

not just about the online world and if you have an online platform

like this and you're talking about people that have never been online

then you're actually going to need some support to be able to help

them access these programmes. And so Good Things Foundation is

building a network, so our network started with no one at 3 October

last year when the program was launched and now we have over

1800 community organisations across the country that are part of

the network and who are supporting people to start their online

journey. They are a really broad range and I know it's really hard to

see, but we do have people in really remote parts of the country as

well as in the major cities and in regional towns. We have libraries,

community centres, men's sheds, Country Women's Associations,

aged care facilities and a whole range of different community

partners that are all there to support. Some of those have been

supporting people in this way before. So lots of the libraries are

doing digital springboard, Be Connected, doing everything they can

to make sure people don't miss out. But some places like the Nowra

Country Women's Association has never done this before and is on

their first journey of starting to help people to do this and so we're

supporting a lot of organisations at different stages of knowing how

to engage with digital skills support and training. So this is just an

example of the kind of people that are in the network. We've got

mostly libraries and community organisations, as well. Our job is to

provide that support. Just like Infoxchange is providing support to

the organisations around digital springboard, we are providing

significant resources. We have lesson plans, we have webinars that

we run for organisations to support them. Our idea is that we're

really here to make sure we can provide them with the support so

they don't have to think about how to do this. They have to think

about how they might use it best in the community and with the

people that they support, because what we say is "You know your

community best, our job is to provide you with the learning

resources and the support to be able to do this in the best way".

We also have a grant program, so we know that it's very hard to

start anything new without some additional resources to make this

happen and as I said, some of the people that are in our network

have never done this kind of work before and I think and, in fact,

probably don't even have technology to be able to do this. We have

three levels of grants. One is an activation grant which is $2,000

for people to be able to buy technology to put on the broadband, to

be able to pay for morning tea because we know people learn better

when they've got a cup of tea and a biscuit. Any of those things to

be able to support them to get a program up and running. The next

level of grants is actually to keep that running. So once they've

actually been involved and engaged in this process to actually start

the next step and to be able to keep that program running for a bit

longer and those amounts go from 2,500 to $15,000. Then we have

capacity builder grants and they're for organisations who are

engaged in this kind of work already or have a particular approach

to working with people that they want to support. We have a range

of different capacity builders, over 25 of them, that are working to

support their communities to engage in the digital world. I know

there's people from National Seniors here. National Seniors is

engaging their whole network in this. We have employment

agencies Workways that are looking at supporting older people who

have been made redundant to learn new skills they need to, to be

able to engage in the digital world and get a job. We've got Bowls

Australia trying to get all the bowls clubs across the country to

engage in digital learning with their members and we have the

Men's Shed who are engaging all of the Men's Sheds are from across

Victoria. So a really broad range of organisations that are there to

not only support network partners to come on board and to get

started, but also to look at the kinds of models that need to happen

to support their kind of organisations to be involved. So far, this is

by June 2018, the numbers keep going up, but we had supported

4,237 people across the country through our network partners to

access that learner platform. But they'd actually supported about

30,000 more than that across that time, as well and of that, of the

learners that looked at our survey they all said there was about 86

per cent of them that said they were really happy with the support

they'd received from the network partner that they had accessed

and we're getting really fantastic stories. These are some of the

examples of what the network partners are saying about the Be

Connected Program and how useful it is to their community.

They're saying they're getting great support and overwhelmingly

positive feedback from their community about how useful it is and I

think again, some of these people have not done this work before.

Although we think that all libraries might have been involved the

Derrinallum library had never done digital skills before and this is

them going "Oh my goodness, this is such a great role for us to play

in the community". What are the learners saying? Well they're

saying we've done some online, we are looking at a baseline kind of

survey of people and how they're going and then we've got

a progression survey. Getting people brand-new to the Internet to

fill in an Internet survey is quite a challenge. We've had quite small

numbers to date, but quite a few people are saying that, about half

the people are saying that they think the Be Connected Program has

improved digital skills and it certainly has improved their online

confidence. They're not quite sure whether it's increased their

connection with their family and friends just yet, but they certainly

are saying that they feel more confident about staying safe online

and that's a really key part and really important given it's the Office

of the E-Safety Commissioner that's running the website. Just an

example of some of the learners that we've got here. So the

woman on the top here with the flowers, her name is Azalea, and

funnily enough, she is passionate about gardening and plants and so

she's not at all interested in using the Internet for accessing social

media, but she's really keen to research information about plants

and she has certainly used that and she's finding it really useful to

make sure that she's at the top of her game with her planting.

She's really happy about that. And then we've got Dieter who's at

a Men's Shed and he was also not interested at all in the Internet,

but then he's found he can save money by shopping online and he

saved over $50 by going online and even with postage it says here.

So he's thrilled, but actually one of the key things he's said is he's

learnt how to do online shopping safely so he's feeling more

confident about that, as well. So it's fantastic that that's happening.

We want as many older people to engage in this and to have the

benefits that some of these learners have had in the Be Connected

program by accessing it and by engaging with the community

partners that are out there. Good Things Foundation is running our

first campaign here in Australia. We've been running this campaign

Get Online Week in the UK for about six years and in that time we

have had over a million people access the Get Online Week activities

and start their online journey in that way. We are running it here in

Australia for the first time this year. We are very excited and also

quite competitive with our team in the UK, so we are trying

desperately to get more organisations involved in it than they have.

Even though they've been doing it for longer. So we're really

thrilled. We only launched at the end of July. We've got over 500

organisations who are definitely doing events during that week so

it's from 15 to 21 October, so this is a shameless plug. If you are

interested in helping people to get online, then please go to the Get

Online Week website and get engaged with this. The idea is try one

thing. It's to make it fun. It's not saying you have to learn how to

code today, you just need to try one little thing and we've got

organisations that are having pop-up events at the local farmers'

market, because there's no better place to learn than around the

vegies and we have organisations working with the local Rural Fire

Service, because they are in a bushfire area and want to make sure

the people in their community have all of their documents easily

accessible in the Cloud or on a USB they can grab quickly. They're

practical things that actually will support people and improve their

lives, but it's also supposed to be fun, too. So please come and talk

to me if you're interested in getting involved in Get Online Week.

Two more little things, so I mean, we are looking, our target is to

get to 2,000 network partners. We're already at 1800 so I'm going

to go beyond that. We're keen to get as many organisations

involved as possible and making sure that as many people see this

as a key part of their service delivery. It's not an add-on,

something that they do because they think it's a good idea to get

people engaged with their grandchildren on Skype. They actually

see this is a really important part of the services they provide,

because being in the world today is being in the digital world. We

want to make sure that people are improving their digital skills so

that the gap between younger people and older people reduces in

the Australian digital inclusion index and I suppose what we want to

do is to make sure that there's funding for other excluded people as

well, because older people are not the only people that are being

left behind in the digital world. So we want to make sure that

there's support for more people, as well. So, thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Ladies and gentlemen, I put it to you that the

last two presentations both by women called "Jess were so good we

should change our name to Jess, regardless of gender. So another

round of applause, please. Just before I send you for your

30-minute break you've got two jobs when you get back. One is

say "Julie, pull the lucky door prize". I forgot! We're doing three

prizes at 3.30. If I don't do it, yell "the prize". I've borrowed

a man's watch so when I say it's the end, say "Julie, give the man

his watch". You've got a task.

(Afternoon tea)