

Why digital inclusion matters

Digital inclusion ensures that no one is left behind as we move towards an increasingly digital future. For [Social Inclusion Week 2015](#), we thought we'd outline why digital inclusion is vital for all Australians.

While many of us have smartphones and access to the internet at home, there are some consumers who don't. Two issues often cited as barriers to digital inclusion are affordability and a lack of digital literacy.

Affordability divide

[Research](#) from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that in 2012–13, 98 per cent of households with a household income of \$120,000 or more had internet access, compared to only 57 per cent of households with a household income of less than \$40,000, suggesting an 'affordability divide' when it comes to broadband.

There are many groups who may be affected by this, including low-income consumers and seniors. ACCAN believes that all consumers should have access to affordable telecommunications services as these are becoming increasingly essential for consumers to fully participate in our digital society.

We explored telecommunications affordability issues at our [2015 National Conference](#). The event brought together delegates from the telcos, community groups, government and regulators to discuss affordability issues for consumers across Australia.

Digital literacy

Lack of digital literacy is an increasingly significant issue as more government services move online as part of the Federal Government's Digital First Strategy which will require all services and public interactions to be available online by 2017. The issue is detailed in a 2015 [OECD report](#) which identified digital literacy as a barrier to uptake of online services stating that "many adults do not have sufficient proficiency in computer skills to feel confident in using e-government services."

ACCAN is concerned that a lack of digital literacy will affect some consumers' ability to access essential Government services such as Centrelink and Medicare as these move online. In reality, everyone is required to continuously update their digital capability to stay in touch and included due to updates to technology and changing applications.

[The Digital Age Project](#), which was funded through the ACCAN Grants Scheme, explores strategies to enable older social housing residents to use the internet by setting up computers and internet access in three communities of older, social housing tenants in Coffs Harbour. At the start of the project, the participants had a lack of confidence using technology. By the project's end more than half said the training had improved aspects of their social engagement and personal confidence showing that education and training projects are viable to help improve digital literacy.

Not-for-profit organisation and ACCAN member, Infoxchange, runs a program called [Go Digi](#) which aims to help consumers advance their digital literacy skills and get online. Consumers can sign up as learners or as mentors to help others become more comfortable with using the internet.

At our 2015 Conference, Infoxchange announced 2016 as the [National Year of Digital Inclusion](#). This project will include events across Australia to raise awareness about digital inclusion and its benefits. Go to the website to find out how you can get involved.

This week we'll be sharing relevant content on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) using the #SIW15 hashtag.