



Australian Communications  
Consumer Action Network

*Council on the Ageing*

COTA - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## Media release

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### **New report shows senior women need more support to get online**

A report released today by Council on the Ageing (WA) and the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) has found that very few senior women are going online due to a lack of skills, anxiety about technology, cybercrime fears and problems with service providers.

COTA's research found that even though 50% of people over the age of 65 now use the internet, older women are falling behind men in their age group. In comparison, 90-100% of 18-44 year olds use the internet.

[\*Where Do I Start? Female Seniors and the Internet\*](#), a research-based and qualitative study, looked at the experiences of 50 women in Western Australian, some of whom had used the internet before and some who had not.

Factors that accounted for the low use of computers and the internet among the group included a lack of knowledge in a number of areas, including how to choose a computer to buy, which internet service provider and modem to use and confusion about virus protection software.

"The women we spoke to in this study had a number of real concerns that had been created through stories in the media about scams and stolen credit card details. Some of them were fearful that technology and internet use would have a detrimental effect on society and that people would lose the ability to communicate," COTA Chief Executive Ken Marston said.

"Interestingly, those who had used the internet before said it had a positive impact on their lives, and non users said it had had a negative impact. It was also telling that non-internet users believe that not having internet access would have a negative impact on their future wellbeing."

ACCAN Director of Research and Development Ryan Sengara said the report highlighted the need for more low-cost training aimed at improving digital media literacy skills for this group.

"Government services, support agencies and businesses are increasingly turning their focus to online delivery of services as we move towards a digital economy in 2020," said Mr Sengara. "What this report shows is that the digital divide needs to be addressed now to avoid entire groups of people being left behind."

ACCAN welcomes the government's announcement in the 2011-12 budget that a further \$10.4 million will go towards continuing the [Broadband for Seniors Program](#) over four years from July and says more is needed.

The report, co-funded by COTA and the ACCAN Grants Scheme, will be released today at the Active Ageing Conference in WA and is available at [www.accan.org.au/research](http://www.accan.org.au/research).

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ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. Our goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhance the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.