

Day 2, 2015 Conference – Year of Digital Inclusion

Teresa Corbin: We're now going to do a quick little switchover of the stage because I'm going to hand over to Infoxchange, who have an exciting announcement. Thank you.

David Spriggs: Thank you, Teresa, and thank you, everybody, for being here this afternoon. My name's David Spriggs. I'm the CEO of Infoxchange. I would like to firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we're meeting on today, and acknowledge their elders past, present and future. I'd also like to acknowledge Infoxchange partners that are here today - Australia Post, who we're really proud to be partnering with on the GoDigi initiative, as well as ACOSS, those from Geelong who've made it here today, Google, Telstra, WorkVentures, and our government and community partners, who will be critical to the success of GoDigi. I'd especially like to acknowledge the support of Teresa and ACCAN for giving us the opportunity to announce 2016 as the National Year of Digital Inclusion here at today's conference. This is a bit of a prelaunch for us today in this announcement. We'll be formally launching the national Year of Digital Inclusion, as you might expect, at the beginning of 2016, but we're really keen to talk to this group about it today, because we'd really like everybody in this room to come on board and be part of the National Year of Digital Inclusion. So today, I was going to talk a little bit about why GoDigi and where the program is up to and what it's about, talk about the Year of Digital Inclusion in our plans, and then I'll invite Theo from Australia Post to talk about Post's plans around the program.

Infoxchange - we're a not-for-profit social enterprise, established 25 years ago on the vision of technology for social justice. We're passionate about creating a more digitally inclusive society, and empowering communities through the use of technology. I volunteered for Infoxchange for about 10 years before I joined Infoxchange seven years ago, so some people say I was a little slow in actually realising I should join the organisation. Um, but back then I've got a vivid memory of time when I was volunteering. I was working in one of the public housing estates and working with a Sudanese family who Infoxchange had provided a computer and internet access to, and provided training on how to use the technology. The Sudanese lady was proudly telling me about her two children - they were using the computer with homework, and how they were doing better at school than they had ever done before. The question she was asking me, as a volunteer trainer, was "What can we learn next? What can we look at?" To me, that's exactly what GoDigi is about - empowering people to learn, to realise their online potential, and to improve their lives. We live today, obviously, in a digital world, where online technology pervades every aspect of work, life and play. Unfortunately, I think, too often we take that for granted - there was discussion in the last session about the mobile phone, and that's now the centre of our lives.

Unfortunately, still, for one in five adult Australians - almost 4 million people - still aren't online. They're missing out, in part because they lack the confidence and the digital skills to take on the online world. Really, that confidence and skills is now what we see as the number one barrier to digital inclusion. Really, this is a national issue that needs a national response. I was hoping for a slide clicker, but maybe somebody could advance that for me? Thanks. Hence why we're delighted to be partnering with Australia Post on the GoDigi initiative, a 4-year national literacy program, aiming to get 300,000 Australians to build up their digital skills. It's made up of a number of components - one is an online platform to bring together learners, mentors and partners with best-practice learning guides and opportunities to connect with face-to-face learning. Our mentor program, which we've launched today, encouraging those with digital skills to help others in the community. And then network partners, who are providing on-the-ground learning opportunities and connecting learners in with the program content. Really, I see that as absolutely critical that the mentors and the network partners - there's no point having an online platform - and trying to ask people who aren't online and connect in to an online learning platform.

It's really all about the mentors and network partners. That's taking learning out of the classroom and into the community. We can only achieve this at scale with the help of those network partners. I'm really pleased to say, today, we have over 100 network partners now on board with GoDigi, from right across the country, ranging from libraries to neighbourhood houses, community organisations across the country. The City of Greater Geelong, who's with us here today, I think is a great example of a partner that's leading a whole-of-community initiative around digital inclusion. We've got individual community groups - people like Koorringal. Some fantastic new partners from NSW have come on board recently. The Shire of Parkes, the City of Willoughby and Lane Cove, who are all running digital pop-up festivals over the next month.

I was fortunate enough to be in Darwin recently with ACCAN at the Broadband for the Bush Alliance. As part of that conference, the Northern Territory Libraries had brought in a dozen Indigenous leaders from remote parts of the territory to teach them about GoDigi and to take it back to their local communities. I found that really inspiring in terms of how quickly they gravitated towards the program, and how much they were talking about what a difference it would make back in their local communities. Some of those communities, with good access to technology. Others, without. In many others, it was three or four houses in the entire community that might have had access to the internet. But they were talking about what a fantastic program could help them from the basics of how to create an email address for people in their community that hadn't been on email, through to how to connect their communities together - the basics that - again, a lot of us take for granted. Listening to music online, getting updates on sports scores - taking that back into their communities. A great example, I thought, of a network partner.

Through the program, we've reached about 100,000 people so far - just over 100,000 people. But we've got a long way to get to that 300,000 target. ..which is where the National Year of Digital Inclusion comes in. So I'm really pleased to announce 2016 as the National Year of Digital Inclusion. It's the cornerstone of the GoDigi program - bringing together learners, mentors, learning partners, pop-up partners across the community. Our aim is to build community spirit, increase the awareness of digital participation, and to connect communities in both the physical and digital worlds. We certainly can't do that by ourselves, hence why we were keen to announce the year today. It's about a lot more than Australia Post and Infoxchange - we really need everybody to come on board in a whole-of-community partnership in order to meet these goals. We were talking about it this morning in the social housing panel - it's not just about governments solving these problems, it's not just about the corporate sector, it's not just about community organisations - we all need to come together.

How can you get involved? At the very basic level, we're encouraging everybody as individuals to sign up as mentors for GoDigi. Like me, I've started with my family and my elderly parents, and helping them get online and helping them make the most of technology. But think about who you can connect with in your local community. We're encouraging, from an organisational perspective, for organisations to look at signing up into GoDigi and having their staff participate on a volunteer basis by staff volunteering in local communities. We'll talk about Australia Post doing that, but it's not just for large organisations - this is for organisations of all sizes to get on board. The conversation series will see a number of round table events across the country, bringing together community, governments, and peak bodies and organisations across the country. So we'd encourage you to get on board with that. And please, if you have other ideas, come and talk to us. If you're already going to be running events next year, if you're looking at digital inclusion programs in 2016, please come and talk to us, and we'd love to help promote them as part of the National Year of Digital Inclusion. In the lead-up to the NYDI, we'll be announcing a number of GoDigi champions. I'm delighted to announce the first three of those today. David Bartlett, the former premier of Tasmania. Nan Bosler, incredible lady, president of the national seniors computer network, and Brad Howarth, a long-time advocate for digital inclusion. We've put together a short video where each of the three of those

want to share why they think the National Year of Digital Inclusion is important. Hopefully, with some help from the technology people, we can run that video. I liked that caption there of "happy guitar and drums".

(LAUGHTER)

David Spriggs: So, thank you. We invite everybody to get involved with the 2016 National Year of Digital Inclusion. Why? Because your mum should be able to follow the score online too! Although I'm not quite sure about the choice of a Bulldogs supporter there. And this one - because your gran should be able to stream Games Of Thrones! I guess we're looking at creating a bit of fun in this program and campaign to bring the community on board. These are going to be postcards which will be made available throughout the Australia Post network for people to be able to send, to raise awareness and to offer their time as a mentor. So I'd invite everybody here to with register with GoDigi as a mentor. Think about what you might be able to do within your own organisations, and please come and talk to us. We'd love to talk to you about getting involved in the National Year of Digital Inclusion. So, thank you, and I'd now like to invite to the stage Theo, who's the general manager of marketing, customer experience and business development. I wasn't brave enough to pronounce his surname! Theo has senior-executive experience across Australia Post, StarTrack and Qantas over many years - and most importantly, he's a passionate advocate for GoDigi within Australia Post. So, please join me in welcoming Theo to the stage.

(APPLAUSE)

Theo: Thank you, David. That surname would have been beyond anybody, and I won't say it so whoever's typing doesn't have to type it, 'cause it's - I'll spare you. There's only one "Theo" in Australia Post and StarTrack. So, thank you, David. I'd also like to acknowledge the owners of the traditional land we're meeting on, and pay respects to their past and present. Thank you, ACCAN, for the opportunity today. David caused me to think there for a second on many things, but one of them - Games Of Thrones would be the end of many grans, if they watched it without warning. Speaking to my daughter before going to work today, I said, "I have to give a talk about something I'm worried about in the immediate future." "What are you worried about?" "The fact that everybody is so engaged in technology that they're disinterested in talking to other beings and being with each other." I think we take it for granted that everybody is connected and has access to everything we think they do. I told her what I was doing this afternoon, and it was quite different to what she's doing, so she was now going to talk about global warming instead.

(LAUGHTER)

Theo: This year has been a fantastic one for our partnership with Infoxchange, having officially launched the GoDigi platform earlier this year in Canberra. Since then, as David mentioned, we've had a number of network partners come on board to join the cause and help us in our quest to tackle the issue of bridging the digital divide. Particularly for those 4 million Australians who lack the skills and confidence to enjoy the benefits of living a connected life through technology. Now our focus is on 2016, and the National Year of Digital Inclusion, which is the perfect platform to bring attention to the issue of digital literacy on a national scale. As Australia Post adapts to the changing needs of Australians, we have a critical role to play in ensuring that no-one's left behind. Our network presence puts us in a wonderful position to help the community, with knowledge and skills to be able to participate in online com, and services, and make safe choices in the digital world. 2016 will be The Year of Digital Inclusion - it provides a unifying platform for Australia Post to engage all Australians around the exciting future of our business, and the ongoing and important role we will continue to play in the community.

Over the past two days of this conference, there have been some important discussions about affordability and access to technology. It's encouraging to hear the positive work being undertaken at both federal and local levels. Our partnership with Infoxchange is particularly focused on ensuring that we enable and connect communities, develop the skills and capability of those most vulnerable to help reduce the digital divide. This includes our part in developing the skills and capability of small businesses to grow and prosper through e-commerce. In addition to these important communities, with Australia Post and StarTrack, we've created positive change in our own backyard, by using our national footprint with our 4,000 stores and 36,000 workforce driving the agenda. 36 We've embarked on an internal GoDigi mentoring program, and created a buddy system within our own workforce to support positive social change while playing a role in inspiring, supporting, directing and leading to help others realise their online potential.

By empowering our employees to share their digital skills and see benefits they can provide to their own networks and local communities, we aim to lead by example, encourage organisations to have similar conversations within their workforces. I encourage everyone here today to start those conversations, if you haven't already - join the GoDigi mentoring movement. That knowledge transfer is so important in a simple and effective way to start to bridge the digital divide and ensure no-one is ever left behind in our ever-changing digital society. It's time to take action. I look forward to working with Infoxchange, and many of you will help make that happen. I believe I was all that was standing between you and afternoon tea, so I welcome you to join us outside for afternoon tea, and I'd like to meet as many of you as I can. Again, thank you for today, and I look forward to the next year. Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)