Getting connected in Peterborough

DIGITAL INCLUSION SOLUTIONS

SACOSS
South Australian Council of Social Service

Getting connected in Peterborough: Digital inclusion solutions

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Our digital inclusion work

SACOSS is working to address challenges to digital inclusion for people who are living on low incomes or experiencing disadvantage. We talk to our members, the community, and government to make sure that ***no one is left behind*** as experiences and services move online.

As part of this work, SACOSS has developed a set of goals to enable all South Australians access to the resources and skills to engage online.

Our goals:

All South Australians:

- Have access to affordable internet connections beyond their mobile phone;
- Have a base level of digital competency as measured by an agreed framework;
- Are able to access South Australian government websites and information without barriers of disability, language, cultural background or data cost.

Every suburb and regional town:

- Has at least one all-weather public internet access facility with computers, printers and long opening hours
- Has at least one secure, non-commercial public Wi-Fi network accessible from multiple public venues.

All South Australians in secondary school have access to their own devices and data at home to enable them to do school work, research and assignments, and online-schooling where necessary.

All South Australians Living with Disability have access to adequate affordable data to enable the use of assistive technology appropriate to their needs.

What is digital inclusion?

As essential services and experiences move online, internet access and skills become more and more critical. Internet costs can now be regarded as a utility, like water or electricity, adding another basic cost for households. People without skills and access will be increasingly left behind, affecting their education and employment outcomes, access to services and overall social inclusion.

Those who are digitally excluded face barriers to accessing and using the internet. Digital inclusion efforts aim to ensure that everyone has access to affordable internet and devices and can use digital platforms.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index measures how digitally included Australians are by measuring affordability, access and ability.

This refers to:

- ***Access*** to a range of devices and options to connect to the internet that are suitable to meet our connection needs
- ***Affordable*** access to mobile and internet services
- The ***Digital Ability*** to confidently perform a range of online tasks – also referred to as digital skills and literacy

The results of the 2021 Australian Digital Inclusion Index showed that South Australia lags behind the national average for digital inclusion, and regional South Australia is less included than Adelaide with almost all regional Local Government areas performing below the state average. These results reveal a digital divide which, unless we act now, will widen and exacerbate social disadvantage.

Digital inclusion in your community

The 2021 Australian Digital Inclusion Index showed that digital inclusion is an important issue for the Peterborough council area. The table below shows that **particularly high levels of digital exclusion** are likely in your area, compared to the rest of the state.

2021 Australian Digital Inclusion Index: Peterborough

	State	DCP	Gap*
Overall ADII score	69	59	-10
Affordability	93	89	-4
Access	70	58	-12
Ability	61	49	-12

**Percentage points below state average*

People experiencing digital exclusion need help to build their skills and access the technology that they need. Communities, services, and government are already providing some support, although more could be done to ensure that ***no one is left behind*** as experiences and services shift online.

The purpose of this guide is for people working to support the community to identify barriers to digital inclusion and connect you to solutions for accessing the internet and digital devices and building digital skills.

SACOSS has spoken to community leaders and groups about the support in your community to bring you a comprehensive guide to the issue of digital inclusion and the support available to you across issues related to access, affordability, and digital ability.

You can expect to find details about your local community and organisations, as well as your rights, and information on the people working across South Australia (and nationally).

What's available in your area?

Access to safe and reliable connections

Network availability and reliability

Each mobile and service provider hosts online coverage maps showing the areas that their networks service.

The District Council of Peterborough area is serviced by:

- Telstra 4G mobile network
- Optus 4G mobile network
- nbn Fibre to the Node

You can also use another mobile carrier who provide their services through infrastructure owned by Telstra or Optus.

Help with access issues

Service issues

The **Regional Tech Hub** operates a hotline and online resource guide to help people living in regional, remote and rural areas across four main areas: getting connected, staying connected, improving connection and using mobile and internet services. Call 1300 081 029 or visit regionaltechhub.org.au

Make complaints about service issues directly to your carrier. If your mobile or internet service provider does not handle your complaint and it needs to be escalated, you can contact the **Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman**. Contact the Ombudsman by phone, 1800 062 058, or go to tio.com.au

Telstra has an online service available to report mobile black spots (gaps in service coverage). Call 13 22 00 to make a complaint or report these issues on the website: telstra.com.au/support/category/broadband/fix/report-a-network-coverage-problem

Optus has a Coverage Commitment – allowing you to exit your contract without incurring charges if you experience service issues in an area where Optus has coverage. Contact Optus on 133 937.

Any internet service provider that uses the **nbn** network can supply you with home broadband. If you are experiencing service disruptions, contact your internet service provider in the first instance.

If you are experiencing further internet problems, it might be an infrastructure issue. You can report these issues to **nbn** by calling 1800 687 626 or go to: nbnco.com.au/support/complaints

Government

Governments have been working to improve mobile and internet access in regional areas, but if you still experience gaps, contact your Local, State, and Federal government representatives and let them know.

Key projects, funded by Federal and State governments (in conjunction with telecommunication carriers), to improve coverage are:

- The **Mobile Black Spot Program**, aimed at improving mobile coverage and service provider options across Australia
- The **Regional Connectivity Program** which provides grants for community infrastructure projects to improve telecommunications access in regional Australia

These programs are informed through consultation with community to identify areas of need.

- **District Council of Peterborough**
  108 Main Street, Peterborough
  (08) 8651 3566
- **Geoff Brock, State MP for Stuart**
  (08) 8633 1210
- **Rowan Ramsey, Federal MP for Grey**
  (08) 8633 1744

Advocacy

Some organisations advocating for better telecommunications access in regional areas include:

The **Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition** is made up of member organisations who represent various interests relevant to people living in remote, regional and rural Australia. These members work together to advocate for better connectivity for remote, regional and rural Australia. More information about the work that the Coalition are doing is available on the **National Farmers Federation** website, nff.org.au/programs/data-and-connectivity/, or the **Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)** website: accan.org.au/accans-work/rural-regional-remote-coalition.

Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia is a collective of community members advocating for improvements to internet infrastructure in rural, regional and remote areas. They are also a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition. Their website includes more details about their work, including submissions made to government and explainers for key issue: birrraus.com/

The **Regional Development Association, Yorke and Mid North** help to support business and government by providing advice and assistance that supports the growth and development of regional areas. The RDA has offices in major towns across the region.

Accessibility

People with disabilities face specific challenges related to the accessibility of mobile and internet services and finding digital equipment that suits their needs.

ACCAN operate an online portal with information about accessible services and equipment, the relevant legislation, and useful contacts: accan.org.au/consumer-information/disability-portal

Purple Orange's General Purpose Distribution Fund can help you to buy assistive technology such as screen readers if you are financially disadvantaged: purpleorange.org.au/what-we-do/our-grants

Affordability of devices and data

The **Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII)** measures affordability challenges using the percentage of household income spent on the 'basket' of mobile and internet services and devices required to be well connected. Households are considered to be experiencing affordability stress when they spend more than 5% of their total income on mobile and internet devices and services. Affordability challenges include disproportionate charges for data allowances and less flexible and independent access to data and devices.

Public access to internet and devices

Free access to internet and devices in public places likes libraries and community centres is important for ensuring that people facing affordability challenges have access to the technology that they need to engage online. Public Wi-Fi provides access to the internet at all hours at a fixed point or series of points, while internet and devices (including computers and printers) for use at publicly accessible spaces, such as community centres and local libraries, is available for free or at a minimal cost, and only during set hours.

In your area, these are available at:

- **Peterborough School and Community Library**
  Queen Street, Peterborough
  (08) 8651 2523

- **Peterborough Community Hub**
  205 Main Road, Peterborough
  (08) 8633 9088

- **Peterborough Youth Centre**
  290 Main Street, Peterborough
  0476 179 991

- **Rural Transaction Centre**
  209 Main Street, Peterborough
  (08) 8651 3531

- **Steamtown Visitor Centre**
  2 Telford Avenue, Peterborough
  (08) 8651 3355

Free Wi-Fi is available in the Main Street of Peterborough

Financial support

Government

The South Australian government offers a **Cost of Living concession** to help people living on low incomes meet their living costs. To receive the concession, you need to submit an application to ConcessionsSA. For more information, email concessions@sa.gov.au or phone, 1800 307 758.

Financial hardship options

If you're having trouble paying for your mobile phone service, get in touch with your provider. There are a range of things they can do to help you cut costs.

Financial counsellors

Financial counsellors can help you to identify and access different sources of support, including grants, loans and hardship options that you may not be able to access otherwise.

The **National Debt Hotline** can help you to find a financial counsellor and talk about financial hardship options. Contact them on 1800 007 007.

The **South Australian Financial Counsellors Association** online tool can help you to find a list of the financial counsellors near you: safca.org.au/find-a-financial-counsellor.html

Grants and loans

Some organisations provide direct grants to individuals that can be used to purchase digital devices. Examples include but are not limited to:

The Wyatt Trust provide direct grants to individuals for education expenses (including digital devices). Grant applications need to be submitted through one of their partner organisations.

Good Shepard provide no interest loans for purchasing devices for education use through their No Interest Loans Schemes (NILS). **Uniting Country South Australia (UCSA)** provide financial counselling services (including No Interest Loans Schemes) to the Peterborough area. UCSA also operate the Peterborough Community Hub.

Digital ability

Digital ability refers to the skills and literacy necessary to access and use a range of basic to advanced digital formats and activities. Those without digital literacy skills face difficulty engaging with education, employment, and government services which assume digital proficiency.

Digital skills for beginners

The **Public Library Service** runs **Being Digital**, an online resource to help build your digital skills and can offer online and face-to-face training in some areas. Contact your local library to find out more.

Be Connected is a digital skills training program, aimed at older Australians, that is delivered across a network of community partners, coordinated by **The Good Things Foundation** (Good Things).

Good Things also provide grants and support to community organisations to deliver training. Information can be found on the Be Connected website: beconnectednetwork.org.au

nbn Community Engagement Managers support general inquiries, improvements to community infrastructure, and deliver regional programs, including workshops on connecting to the internet, scams awareness, and the Online Skills Check and Resources (OSCAR) tool.

The Community Engagement Manager for the Peterborough area is Lyndsey Jackson. You can contact Lyndsey by phone, 0448 737 162, or email, lyndseyjackson@nbnco.com.au

Find out more about the program on their website: nbnco.com.au/learn/regional

Digital skills for more experienced users

Skill Finder, funded by the Federal Government, helps users to identify free online courses to build advanced digital skills for a range of business and career pathways. Access the courses on their website: skillfinder.com.au/

Digital Springboard, operated by Infoxchange in conjunction with Google, offers online courses for people with existing digital skills to build their skills further for work or business or in a disaster. Find out more at: digitalspringboard.org.au/courses

Google offer free (and some paid) online courses on skills ranging from coding, online marketing, digital wellbeing and more through their **Digital Garage** program. Go to learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage/ to browse the available courses.

Microsoft run a range of free digital skills training programs in partnership with LinkedIn and GitHub. These programs are focused on developed IT skills for specific career paths like data analysts, IT support, and software developers. Find out more at: microsoft.com/en-au/digital-skills/job-seekers

Staying safe online

The **eSafety Commissioner** provides information and training on how to navigate the internet safely, including strategies to avoid scams. Their resource guides are tailored for specific groups including students, teachers and frontline support workers, parents and carers, older people, businesses, and community organisations. The information is available at: esafety.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/our-programs/training

Organisations like **Digital Rights Watch** advocate for safer and fairer internet spaces by supporting stronger legislation for consumer rights and holding government, corporations, and other organisations accountable. You can find out more or support their work on their website: digitalrightswatch.org.au/

Consumer rights

Telecommunications consumers have rights set out in the **Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code**.

Telecommunications companies must deal with complaints in accordance with rules set out in legislation - Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints Handling) Industry Standard 2018.

The **Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)** regulate communications and media services – including mobile and internet providers, and the **Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman** can investigate complaints.

The **ACMA** website, acma.gov.au, has more information about your rights and troubleshooting guides for a range of common problems, such as receiving spam and telemarketing calls and emails.

The **Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)** advocate for better consumer rights. They also operate an online resource guide containing resources on topics such as how to handle unexpected large bills, buying a mobile phone, getting help with technology that won't work, your consumer rights, and staying safe online available at: accan.org.au/consumer-information/talking-telco-tip-sheets

What can you do?

SACOSS wants all South Australians to have access to the resources and skills that they need to engage online. There are a lot of solutions available to help but more is needed.

We have ideas for key areas that the State Government can work in to ensure that regional areas are not left behind.

- It is crucial that every regional town has publicly available access to internet and devices.
- As government and other services move online, all South Australians need access to an affordable internet connection beyond their mobile phone.
- Government websites and information should be truly accessible – websites should not incur data charges and they should be user-friendly for people with disabilities and of all language and cultural backgrounds.
- We need a framework for assessing digital skills.
- South Australians with disabilities should have access to the data that they need for the use of assistive technology.
- Secondary school students need home access to devices and data to complete their schoolwork.

These are some key areas for change to ensure *no one is left behind* as services and experiences shift online.

There may be more key areas and challenges facing you and your community. This guide includes some ideas for what you can do and who you can approach.

Your local, state and federal government representatives are also key contacts who are there to listen to your views and advocate for your area.

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SACOSS acknowledges traditional owners of country throughout South Australia, and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to elders past, present and future.