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Indigenous Focus Day 2019

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Communique - July 2019

The Indigenous Focus Day (IFD) is an annual event. The theme for the 6th Indigenous Focus Day was Shaping Our Digital Futures – Apurte Akaltje-antheme (Arrernte for 'learning together').

This year, over 90 delegates from remote and regional communities, industry stakeholders and Government came together on 27th June in Mparntwe/ Alice Springs. All participated in a powerful day of sharing of knowledge, experience and ideas and planning for a digitally inclusive future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. The group discussed practical solutions to the key obstacles to digital inclusion, including availability of broadband and mobile services, local access, affordability, awareness (skills, services and cyber-safety) and appropriateness of technology and programs.

The IFD was hosted by First Nations Media Australia, having previously been part of the annual Broadband for the Bush Forum. It was supported by the Broadband for the Bush Alliance (recently disbanded), and was sponsored by Telstra and the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN).

The day began with an inspiring keynote address by Senator Malarndirri McCarthy. This was followed by 12 presentations by First Nations people and organisations groups outlining innovative community-driven projects to develop skills and jobs and use new technologies to connect with family and friends, access online services and applications, record and share stories, and maintain culture and languages.

These practical case studies provided the background for three breakout group discussions on innovative solutions and strategies to address the obstacles to digital inclusion at a local, regional and national level. The outcome of the day was the development of a Policy Action Plan to take to government.

The Policy Action Plan is built upon discussions at previous Indigenous Focus Days, which proposed that Indigenous Digital Inclusion become a Closing the Gap target, outlining a six-part Indigenous Digital Inclusion Strategy. The IFD was followed by a showcase event open to the public which featured 10 displays of innovative digital projects and resources. This provided an opportunity for more in-depth discussions about the projects and hands-on interaction with the tools.

Availability | Affordability | Awareness | Appropriateness



Key Recommendations - Policy Action Plan

Delegates reiterated the call for Indigenous Digital Inclusion to be considered a Closing the Gap target within the current review of the Closing the Gap framework. This would be a key enabler to address significant structural barriers to achieving Closing the Gap targets in areas such as health, justice and education.

The group called on the Government to implement the six-part Digital Inclusion Program, aimed at to reduce inequity and increase access to services and opportunities:

1

Remote Data collection to measure access, availability, affordability and digital literacy.

4

Affordable access - unmetered access to all key online services; affordable pre-paid mobile options.

2

Improve availability - prioritised roll-out of broadband and mobile coverage to communities with limited access.

5

Digital Literacy - culturally and language appropriate skills program in remote communities, locally tailored to needs and existing levels of digital access, engagement and skills

3

Last-mile access - public Internet access through community-wide WiFi; community access computers.

6

Digital Mentors program to provide local jobs and a peer-supported learning model

The group identified key principles and challenges for developing an Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan.



Key Principles

- Co-creation and co-delivery by First Nations organisations/ people
- Locally designed and delivered program delivery model by community-controlled organisations including local control over internet/WiFi sharing for safety and cultural authority.
- Flexibility for localised contexts, acknowledging disadvantage manifests differently in remote, regional and urban locations.
- Coordinated support for community-based organisations to deliver programs locally (eg of infrastructure, bulk purchasing, resources).
- Build on success of existing organisations, programs and learnings.
- Recurrent program funding to enable program development, maintain jobs and skills development, and reduce wastage and disruption in stop/ start programs.
- Collaborative Partnerships with Government, industry and community.
- Engagement to develop skills and competence through relevant activities; People are rapid adopters of technology where available and adventurous learners, but find it hard to keep up with technology changes.
- Motivational drivers such as relevant applications, content, tools, and hands-on, project based activities;
- Employment outcomes including digital mentors and increased local economic development opportunities.
- Online safety to promote personal trust and cultural safety.
- Inclusive of all communities, no matter where they are or how big, including the homelands and outstations.
- Rights driven to address the privacy of program participants, data sovereignty and recognition of intellectual property rights.
- Culturally appropriate delivery models, resources, content and apps.

The four key obstacles to digital inclusion are:

1

Availability - access to services and ICTs, including last mile distribution and community access facilities;

3

Awareness - digital skills, cyber-safety issues, knowledge of services/ content availability;

2

Affordability of mobile and internet services, ICT/ devices and technical support;

4

Appropriateness - of content and applications, interfaces, language services

The Challenge

Digital inclusion is recognised as one of the key social justice challenges facing policy makers and communities worldwide. It is about using technology as a channel to improve skills, to enhance quality of life, to drive education, access employment opportunities and promote social and economic wellbeing. In 2019, digital inclusion equates to social inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and is essential to Closing the Gap. Digital Inclusion is described as a Human Right (UN 2016) and the need for digital inclusion of Indigenous peoples outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). Digital Inclusion underpins many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to which Australia is a signatory.

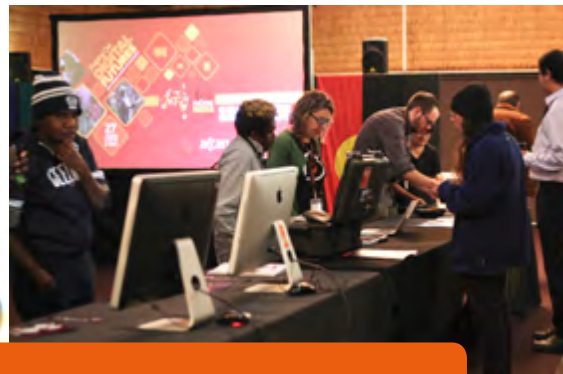
The Digital Inclusion Index 2018 found that digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians is 6% below the Australian average. While this figure is an improvement on the 2017 score, the measures do not include results from remote Australia. Remote Indigenous people still remain the most digitally excluded group in Australia.

Progress to Date

IFD delegates acknowledged the improved availability of broadband and mobile services in remote and regional Australia through the NBN Skymuster and Public Interest Premises program, Mobile Black Spots program and state/territory government co-investment, Community Phones WiFi enhancement, improved mobile plans and other government and industry initiatives.

A number of digital inclusion programs are making an impact in the regions they are operating, including the Telstra funded programs - inDigiMOB Digital Mentors program in 13 remote NT communities, Digital Deadly Communities in northern Queensland, Indigenous Digital Excellence program – as well as the Government funded Be Connected program aimed at seniors.

However, further and ongoing initiatives are needed to address the gaps in these programs, especially for remote communities, low socio-economic populations, and areas of market failure. In particular, there has not been a targeted Indigenous digital literacy program since the Remote Indigenous Public Interest Access program ended in 2015.



With thanks to

Kumalie Riley for Welcome to Country

MC Christine Ross

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy for Keynote Address

All who attended, presented, facilitated breakout sessions and participated on the day.

Participant organisations

Ara Irititja

Anindilyakwa Land Council

ARDS Aboriginal Corporation

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Batchelor Institute

Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association

Charles Darwin University

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Department of Corporate and Information Services NT
Desart

Easyweb Digital

First Nations Media Australia

Imparja Television

Indigenous Community Television

IndigenousX

IndigiMOB

Ingeous Studios

InyerPocket Software

iTalk Studios

Katherine Regional Arts

Leep NGO

Lutheran Community Care

Ngaanyatjarra Media

National Centre of Indigenous Excellence

NBN Co

PAW Media

State Library of Queensland

Telstra

Tinkerbee

Tangentyere Council

Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

Showcase presenters

Ara Irititja - Ara Winki App

Anthwerke (Emily Gap) Interactive Tour

Batchelor Institute

CLC - Digital Archiving

DPMC - Your online journey

ICTV - In Language

indigiTUBE

inDigiMOB

indigEmoji

iTalk Studios

Further information

[Indigenous Focus Day event info](#)

[Event Program](#)

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