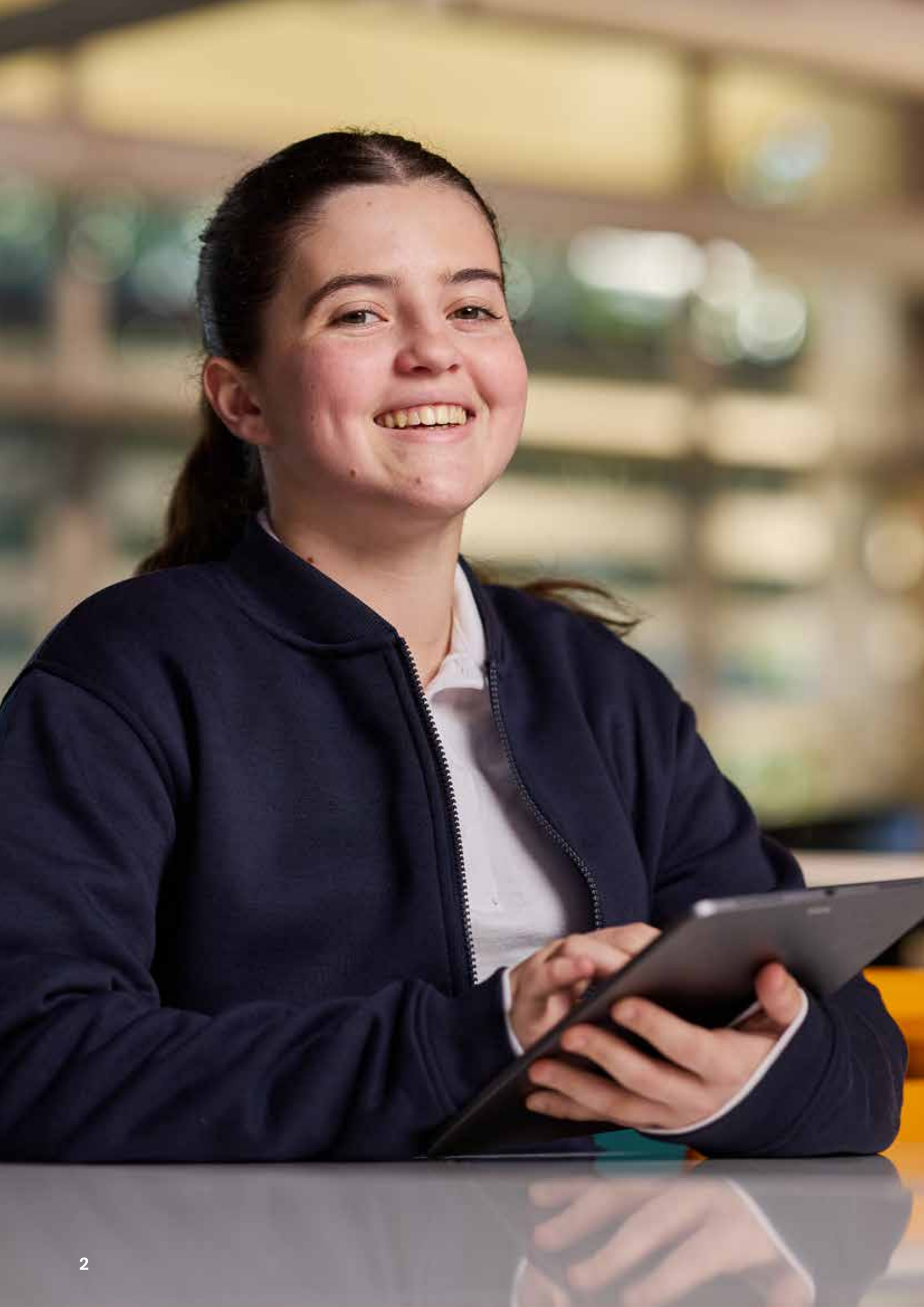
WorkVentures
social inclusion through technology

The Smith Family
Learn today, change tomorrow.

# **Digital divide:** The case for digital inclusion in Australia

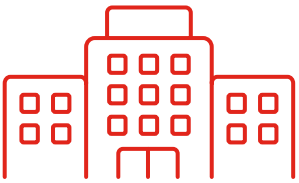
October 2026





# Key messages

## Ensuring every young Australian has access to the digital technology and skills to participate fully in society is essential for a fairer and more prosperous Australia



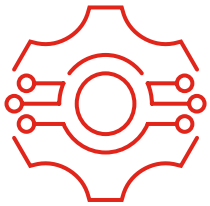
### As technology becomes ubiquitous, millions of young Australians are digitally excluded

Despite the growing necessity of digital tools for school, work, health care, social inclusion, and initiatives that aim to address equity gaps, 1.42 million Australians aged 8 to 25 lack access to a computer,[1] and students of low-skilled parents are less than half as likely to reach Year 10 ICT proficiency.[2]



### Broadening digital inclusion would unlock substantial economic and social benefits

We estimate that current students who are digitally excluded will forego up to $56 billion in additional lifetime earnings, while missing out on significant health and social benefits they could otherwise receive through increased participation in tech-enabled services and more digitally connected communities.[3]



### A national digital inclusion strategy is needed to close the digital divide and deliver true equity

Laptops are necessary but not sufficient for digital inclusion; internet connectivity and digital support are also needed for students to reach their potential.

That's why we need an ambitious national strategy, which recognises digital inclusion as essential infrastructure, sets minimum expectations, provides integrated digital packages for students, and invests in the circular economy.

## Fostering digital inclusion

Digital inclusion means having the capabilities and access to confidently use information communication technologies (ICTs).[4] As such, digitally included students have reliable access to **devices** and **internet connectivity**, and the **digital literacy skills** needed to use them.

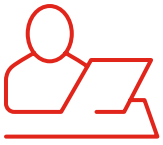
All three elements must be in place for students to realise educational benefits. Without any of these, a student is digitally excluded.




[1] Telstra Foundation (2025). [2] ACARA (2026). [3] Note: this estimate is nominal, and does not account for inflation. [4] Thomas, J. et al. (2025).

# Students living with disadvantage are excluded from education by a digital divide

## Over a million young Australians lack access to a home learning device, and disadvantaged students lag behind their peers in ICT skills



**In 2025, 1.42 million young Australians (aged 8–25) lack home access to a laptop or desktop computer, including 523,000 aged 14 and over,** for whom computer access is essential for learning and daily tasks. This represents 23% of Australians aged 8–25, up from 19% in 2024, indicating that digital exclusion is worsening.[1]



**11% of young people lack access to internet at home, and nearly 1.5 million young people (24%) use mobile data as their main way to connect to the Internet.**[2]



**45% of Australian families surveyed by The Smith Family cannot or struggle to afford laptops or other digital devices needed for school.**[3]




**In 2025, 50% of Year 6 students and 63% of Year 10 students failed to reach the proficient standard for NAP-ICT Literacy,** with outcomes worse for students with lower skilled parents or living further from metropolitan areas.[4]



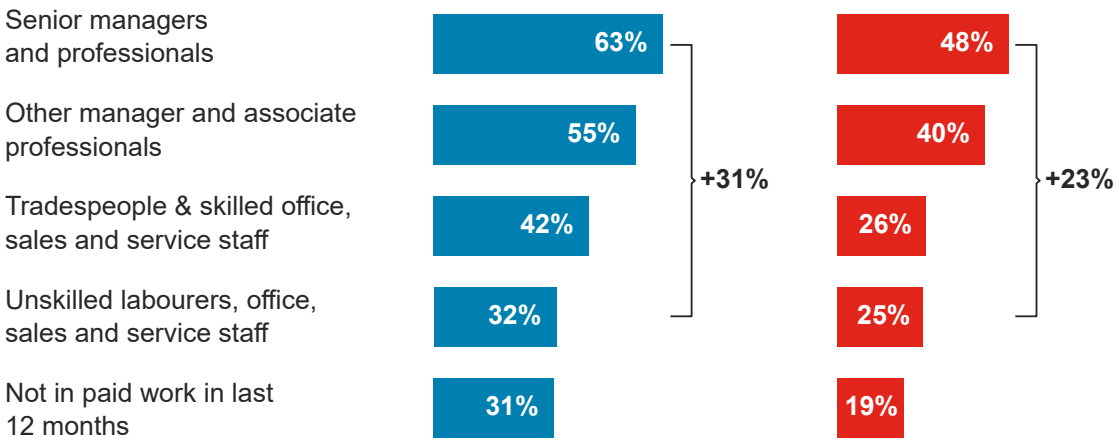
**By Year 10, just 19% of children of the lowest skilled workers achieved NAP-ICT Literacy proficiency, compared with 48% for children of the highest skilled workers.** The gap is even wider for children whose parents are unemployed (see Figure 1).[5] In effect, children of low-skilled parents are less than half as likely to be digitally proficient, entrenching disadvantage just as these skills become critical for further education, training and employment.



[1] Telstra Foundation (2025a). [2] Telstra Foundation (2025b). [3] The Smith Family (2024). [4] ACARA (2026). [5] Ibid.

**Figure 1: There is a significant gap in ICT Literacy proficiency between children of the highest and lowest skilled workers**

Proportion of **Year 6** and **Year 10** students reaching proficiency in ICT Literacy




*Source: ACARA (2026)*



# This divide limits student opportunities in an increasingly digital world

## As technology permeates education, excluded students risk falling behind

Digital access is no longer a luxury – it's a necessity. As schools rapidly digitalise, the gap between students who can engage and those who cannot is widening. Australia's classrooms are becoming more reliant on technology every year, yet many students still lack the basic tools required to participate. Without a device and a reliable internet connection, students are shut out of increasingly digital learning environments and risk falling behind their peers.

International evidence shows that purposeful use of technology in the classroom can boost learning.[1] But when students lack digital access, the benefits of digital learning flow only to those already equipped. Recent Australian and international surveys make clear that students without devices or reliable connectivity struggle to complete schoolwork and are disproportionately affected when learning has a digital component.



**In 2025, 32.9% of Australian schools consider themselves "highly technologically enabled"** – a figure which is up from 23.1% in 2023.[2]



**84% of surveyed students reported struggling to complete schoolwork before receiving a laptop** through one WorkVentures program supporting students from low income homes.[3]



**A UK COVID-19 survey found learning was disrupted for 52% of students with slow or unreliable internet, and 18% without access to a suitable device.**[4]

## Digitally excluded students also risk being less prepared for a tech-enabled workforce

Digital skills can now shape a young person's future. As digital capability becomes a core requirement for employment, students who lack digital access and ICT skills face real risks of being locked out of the workforce. Employers increasingly expect tech-confident applicants, and young people who are digitally excluded today may struggle to compete tomorrow.

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence is compounding this disadvantage. As more work becomes AI-enabled, students without strong ICT foundations are at greater risk of being left behind. Digital exclusion also affects young people's ability to search for jobs in the first place, limiting access to online platforms where most jobs are now advertised.



**Adults with the highest ICT skill levels are 6% more likely to be participating in the workforce** than adults with the lowest levels of these skills.[5]



**87% of jobs now require some level of digital skill.**[6]



**26% of Australian workers already use AI daily, signaling rapid transformation in the economy.**[7]



**58% of employers advertise jobs online, and 25% use social media, along with other channels.**[8]



**One-third of job seekers report lacking confidence when applying for jobs due to low digital skills.**[9]

[1] OECD (2024). [2] Campion Education (2025). [3] Work Ventures (2023). [4] Office for Students (2020). [5] OECD (2015). [6] RMIT (2021). [7] EY (2025). [8] JSA (2025). [9] AKG (2024).



# In many states, families carry the cost of device provision for school students

## Access to learning devices remains inconsistent across states and is typically dependent on individual school arrangements

Since the conclusion of the *Digital Education Revolution* in 2013, Australia has shifted to mixed models of device provision for school students, including school-supplied devices, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) programs, or hybrid approaches.

Responsibility for selecting the most appropriate model is typically devolved to school principals in consultation with their communities, though implementation and approaches to equity and hardship support vary significantly across states and territories.

More recently, for example in ACT and Victoria, jurisdictions and schools have moved away from BYOD in primary settings, driven by policy intent to reduce cost pressures on families and standardise access to digital learning tools., and noting the smaller role for devices in primary education.

Most jurisdictions offer device and internet access programs for families experiencing financial hardship, alongside Commonwealth support through the School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI), which provides free NBN access to up to 30,000 families nationally until June 2028.[1]

However, gaps in coverage, funding constraints, and high eligibility thresholds mean that too many students across Australia still lack access to a suitable learning device. As such, current policy settings are insufficient to close the digital divide nationally.

[1] NSW Government (2025a).

**State by state analysis of device access polices and support for government schools, as at August 2026**

| | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General device access policy** | • Schools determine the appropriate device access program for their community , which may include BYOD programs[2] | • From 2027, primary schools, may not offer BYOD, and secondary BYOD programs require a low-cost option<br>• Secondary schools must ensure all students have access to technologies needed for learning[5] | • Schools opt-in to 1-1 device program if deemed appropriate[6]<br>• Either BYOD (parent-funded) or school provided laptops that can be taken home | • Schools have the option of running a BYOD program or providing students with school-owned devices[9] |
| **Mechanism of device provision or support for low-income students** | • Broadly, individual schools manage device provision. Schools may loan devices to students who lack access for home learning[3]<br>• A NSW Device Bank (to provide low-income households with devices) is also at a pilot stage[4] | • Schools may loan or donate devices to students from low-income households to ensure access to technologies for learning[5]<br>• BYOD restrictions minimise costs of devices for parents | • Student Resource Schemes may waive device fees for eligible parents (via school principals)[7]<br>• Student Technology Equity Partnership to deliver 140,000 devices to schools with low-income students over the next 4 years[8] | • Secondary Assistance Scheme offers financial assistance for expenses (e.g. school device fees) to low-income families[10]<br>• However, Educational Program Allowance is only $235 (paid to school directly) |

| | SA | Tas | NT | ACT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General device access policy** | • School Device Program has mandatory ratios of school-provided devices for primary and secondary schools to meet by 2027[11] | • BYOD programs optional for schools, who have a mix of school-provided and student-owned devices in classrooms[13] | • Variety of school-provided devices, classroom sets, and BYOD programs[14]<br>• State-provided broadband for schools across NT | • Primary schools receive state funding for at least 1 device for every 3 students<br>• Chromebooks provided to all Year 7 students (1-1)[15] |
| **Mechanism of device provision or support for low-income students** | • School Card Scheme to finance device-use fees for low-income families[12]<br>• Also free device access for eligible Year 7 and 10 students (funded by state) | • Beyond programs delivered by non-profits (such as *Tech4Kids* – see page 14) there is limited support or device provision for disadvantaged students | • Beyond programs delivered by non-profits, there is limited support or device provision for disadvantaged students | • Not applicable – all students in government schools can access state-funded devices |

[1] DITRDCSA (2026). [2] NSW DE (2025). [3] NSW DE (2026a). [4] NSW DE (2026b). [5] Vic DE (2026). [6] Qld DE (2026a). [7] Qld DE (2026b). [8] Qld DE (2026c). [9] WA DE (2019). [10] WA DE (2026). [11] SA DE (2026). [12] Ibid. [13] Tas DECYP (2024). [14] NT Government (2026). [15] ACT Government (2026).

# We're partnering to address the digital divide in Australian schools

## WorkVentures and The Smith Family have partnered to address the digital divide and the impacts of exclusion

The partnership brings together WorkVentures' (WV) expertise in digital and device refurbishment with The Smith Family's (TSF) *Learning for Life* (LFL) program, providing support that begins early in a child's life and continues throughout their education – a reach that currently extends to more than 70,000 students.

Together, we are delivering refurbished laptops and personalised digital capability support to students who would otherwise miss out, through The Smith Family's *Digital Learning Essentials*.

WorkVentures also supports a broader a suite of digital access initiatives.

These programs all aim to build individual participation in learning and equal opportunity – worthy aims in their own right. At a larger scale, they also aim to address the broader challenge of systemic inequity.





**Digital Learning Essentials (TSF/WV)**, established in 2022, provides a laptop and digital capability building for Year 6 and 7 students in the LFL program who lack device access. Internet connection is also facilitated through telecommunications partners for LFL families lacking access (see pages 9-10).



**Laptops for Lifelong Learning (WV)**, a WorkVentures and KPMG collaboration established in 2022, provides refurbished laptops and digital capability building to support students experiencing digital exclusion (see page 15).

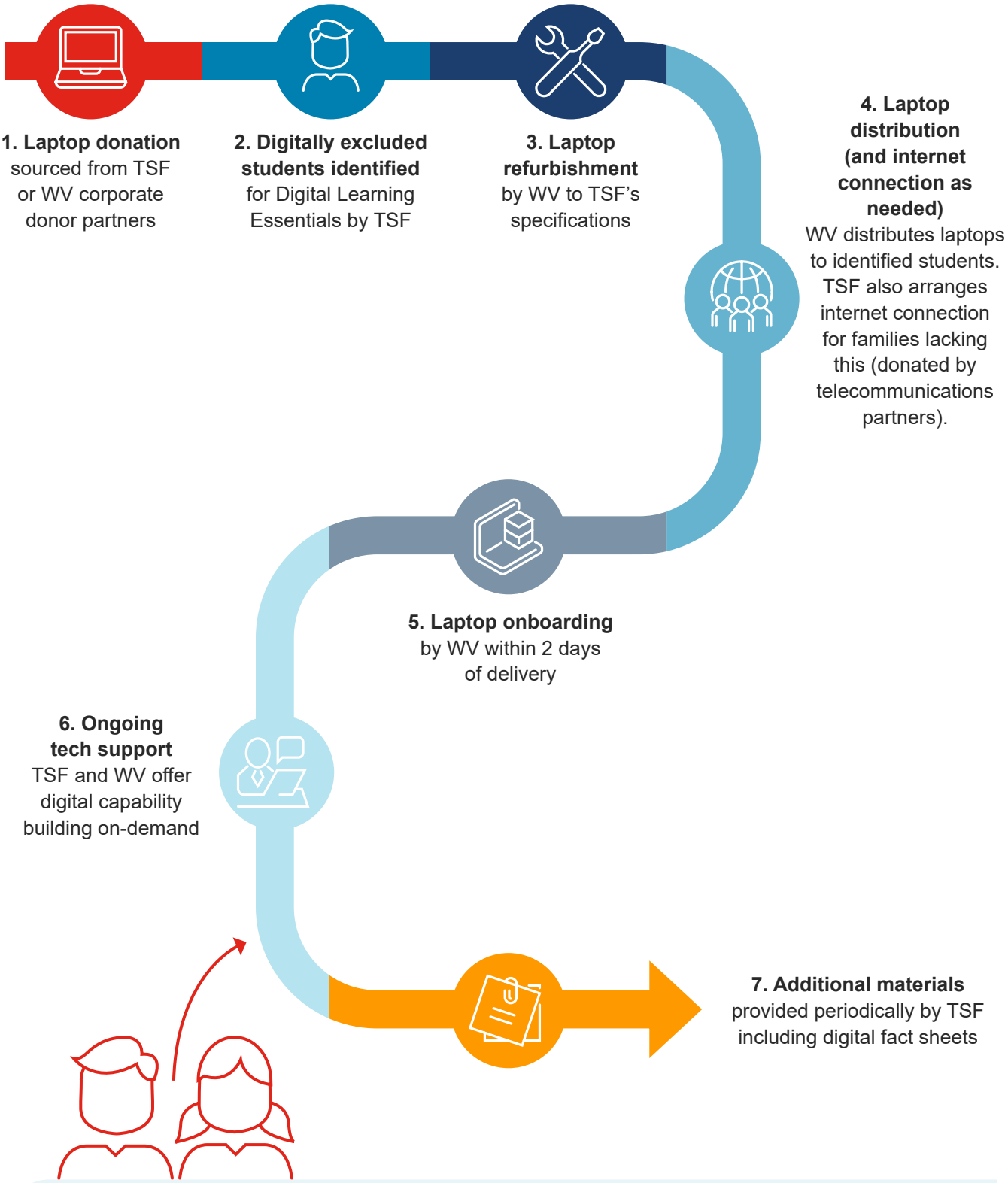


**Tech4Kids (WV)** provides laptops and digital capability building to students in Year 5 to 12 in disadvantaged schools across Tasmania. It was established in 2025 by WV with ABCN and a range of local partners (see page 14).



**National Device Bank (WV)** aims to source retired devices from companies and government agencies, to be refurbished and redistributed for free to people who are digitally excluded (see page 11).

**Figure 3: Key features of the *Digital Learning Essentials* partnership between The Smith Family and WorkVentures**




The *Digital Learning Essentials* partnership between The Smith Family and WorkVentures focuses on Year 6 and 7 students participating in The Smith Family's Learning for Life scholarship who **do not already have access to a laptop or tablet** (whether their own or shared).

# *Digital Learning Essentials* has provided devices and coaching for 11,310 students

## We provided 11,310 laptops to students without access

Through the *Digital Learning Essentials* partnership, WorkVentures and The Smith Family provide refurbished laptops and digital capability building to students already participating in TSF's *Learning for Life* scholarship who do not already have access to a laptop or tablet (whether their own or shared). Devices are targeted to families most in need, and students living with disadvantage are more likely to receive devices (see Figure 4). For students in households with no existing Wi-Fi connectivity, TSF also arranges internet connection (donated by telecommunications partners).

**Since 2022, we have provided 11,310 refurbished laptops to students lacking access to a device, 96% of whom were in Year 6 or 7.**

**41% of students offered a device had parents who were educated to Year 10 or below, compared to 35% of students not offered a device,** in a study of Year 6 LFL students in 2023.

## We completed over 50,000 acts of digital capability building, highlighting that support is integral to inclusion

A major value add of *Digital Learning Essentials* is that it goes beyond device provision to deliver free, ongoing digital capability building for families. Every laptop is paired with onboarding support, practical coaching and trusted guidance on digital literacy and online safety – ensuring families are supported to use technology confidently, not left to manage alone. 5.5 capability building contacts were made for every laptop provided, underscoring that true digital inclusion requires support, not just a device.

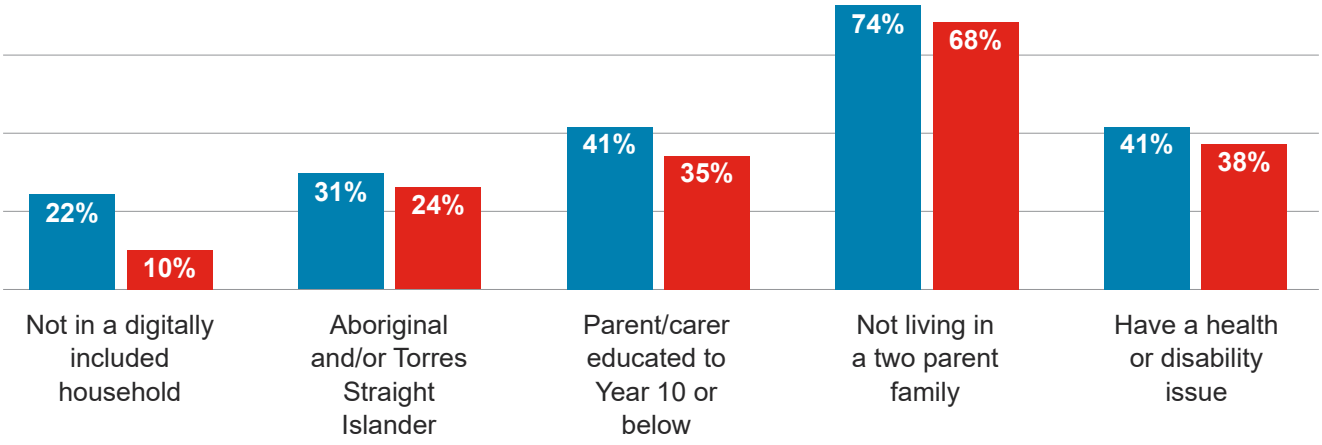
**WorkVentures and The Smith Family delivered 50, 193 acts of digital capability building across the three financial years to 2024–25.** Support included onboarding and coaching calls, technical support, impact surveys, responses to online queries and emails, and resolution of delivery issues.

**The Smith Family has produced 38 Digital Skills Hub resources covering online safety, digital wellbeing, communication skills and troubleshooting.** WorkVentures complements this with Microsoft Family Safety training, enabling parents to set up free parental-control tools, manage screen time and filter content via an app.

Notes: Program data for Digital Learning Essentials is accurate as at March 2026.

**Figure 4: Students provided with a device were likely to be from more disadvantaged backgrounds, compared with other students in the *Learning for Life* program**

Proportion of **students provided with a device** and **students not provided with a device** by demographic characteristic




*Source: Internal analysis of The Smith Family data. The analysis compares two groups of LFL students who were in Year 6 in 2023: 2,092 students who were provided a device compared to 3,711 students who were not.*

## The National Device Bank partnership aims to support over 100,000 people with devices within 5 years

NATIONAL DEVICE BANK
Empowering Access to Tech

WorkVentures and its partners are building an exciting new piece of social infrastructure – a National Device Bank of donated and refurbished laptops, tablets and mobiles.

The National Device Bank encourages Australian companies and government agencies to donate their technology so that the devices can be refurbished and redistributed for free to people who are digitally excluded, with school students being a priority target group. Within 5 years, the National Device Bank aims to secure 1 million device pledges to create a pipeline to support disadvantaged communities into the future.

Public and private sector partners can help by donating laptops and funding.



# *Digital Learning Essentials* delivers strong learning and social benefits

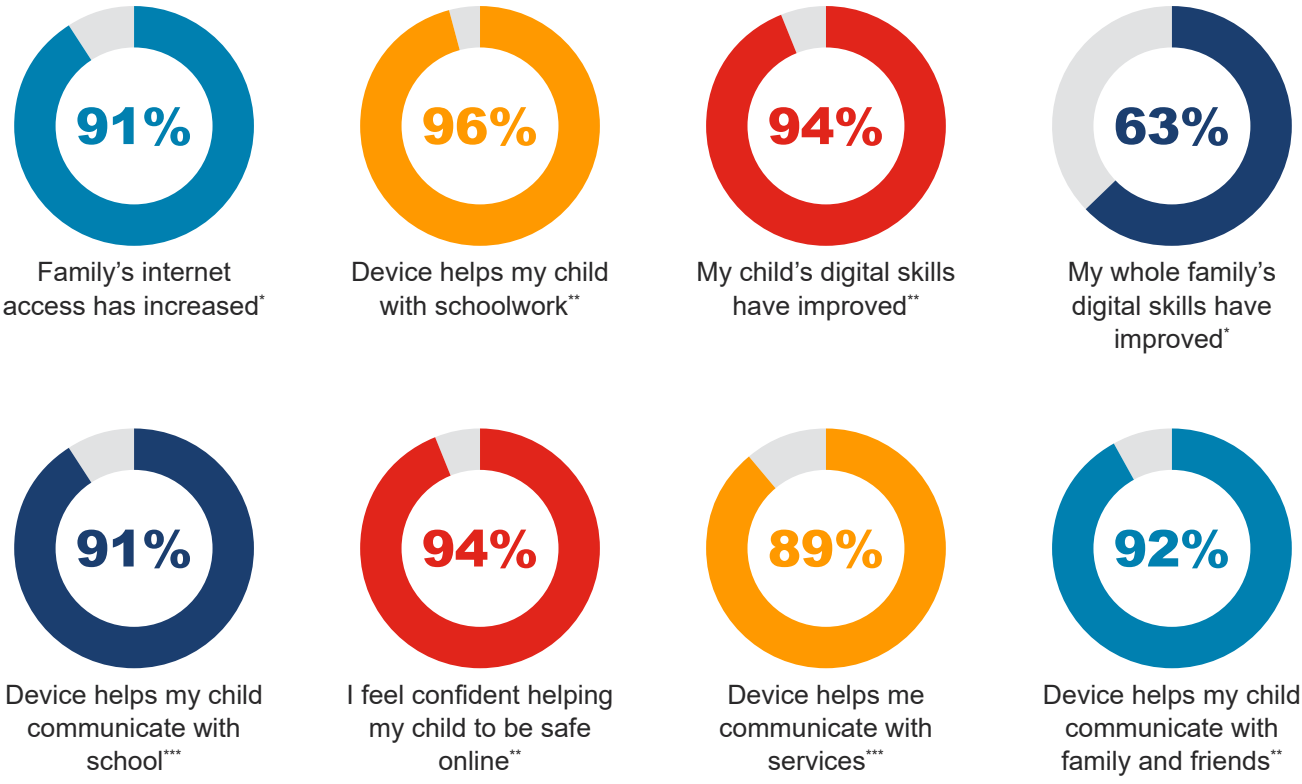
## *Digital Learning Essentials* improved students' digital skills, while providing a range of learning and social benefits

Parent feedback shows that laptop provision through *Digital Learning Essentials* delivers clear benefits for children's learning while helping families engage confidently online and stay connected to schools. For example, 94% of parents agree that having a device increased their child's digital skills, and 96% agree it helped with schoolwork (including 70% who strongly agree).**

Further, parents reported improvements in the whole family's digital skills for 63% of families receiving a device, compared with only 46% of LFL families provided with internet access alone.* These benefits extend beyond the classroom, with parents reporting better communication with social services, stronger online safety awareness and increased everyday digital use across households (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Parents surveyed through the *Digital Learning Essentials* program reported strong educational and social benefits of device provision**

Proportion of parents who agreed with each statement




Source: Parent Surveys, Digital Learning Essentials. Notes: *FY25 parent survey only. **Combines FY24 and FY25 parent surveys. ***Combines FY22 to FY25 parent surveys. Combined results reported, where possible, for questions asked in multiple years.

# Similar WorkVentures programs support digital access for thousands of students

## *Tech4Kids* demonstrates the social benefits of device access, helping students to pursue their hobbies and interests

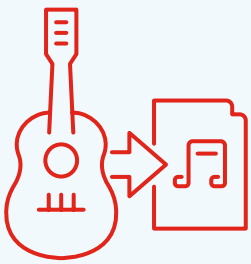
*Tech4Kids* is a regional digital inclusion initiative delivered by WorkVentures with local Tasmanian partners. Launched in 2025, it has successfully delivered over 1,000 free refurbished laptops, together with digital capability building, to Year 5 to 12 students in low-income communities.

A unique feature of the *Tech4Kids* program is the inclusion in student laptops of a software providing selected, de-identified data on device use, including internet use, subject to robust privacy limitations and protections designed with project partners.

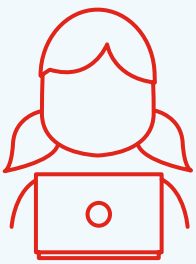
Early evidence demonstrates a diverse array of benefits for students receiving laptops. A survey of 200 students indicated that the program enables not only learning but also wellbeing, by supporting students to deepen their hobbies and personal interests and to access online mental health support.[1] Based on device use data, 2.3% of devices were even used for job-hunting activities, suggesting the devices supported parental or student employment searches, and/or student careers education.



**99% of students reported that they used their devices primarily for educational purposes.**



**63% of students reported that they intend to also explore personal interests such as art, music, or coding on their devices.**



**65% of students reported that they used their laptops after school for up to two hours of extended learning.**

[1] WorkVentures internal data.

Notes: Program data for *Tech4Kids* and *Laptops for Lifelong Learning* is accurate as at March 2026.

## Laptops for Lifelong Learning supported higher grades for 83% of students and a range of new digital skills

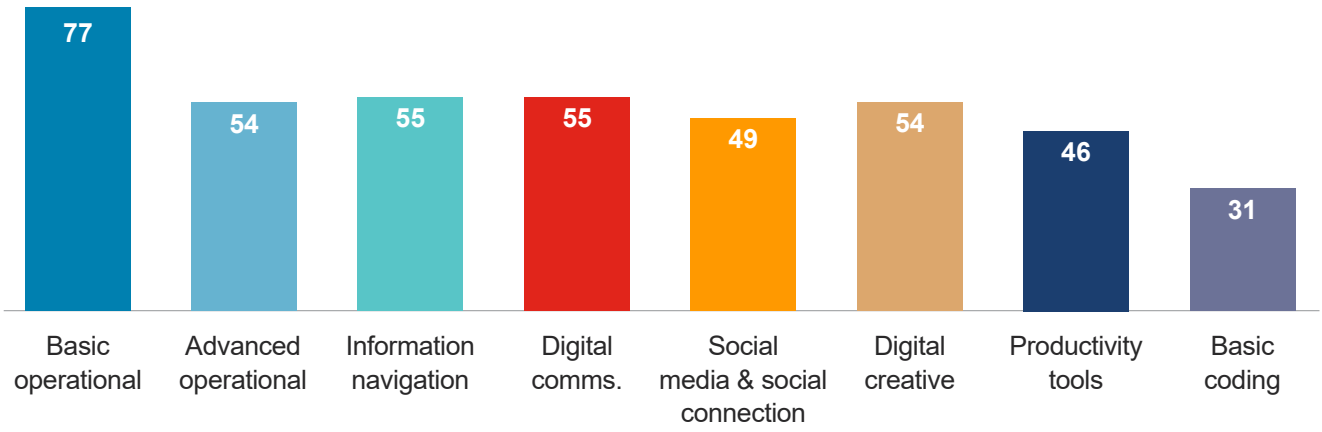
Since 2022, WorkVentures has collaborated with KPMG Australia to deliver the *Laptops for Lifelong Learning* (LLL) program, helping address digital exclusion for students in low socioeconomic communities. Through the donation of refurbished laptops and personalized digital capability support, the program empowers young people with the tools and skills they need to fully engage in their education and achieve their potential..

The majority of the devices are distributed through the Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) which identifies and connects participating schools with the program. To date, the program has provided more than 1,200 refurbished laptops to students.

2023 research into LLL, involving 134 students at 6 disadvantaged schools across Australia, demonstrated deep educational and social benefits. Before laptop provision, 84% of surveyed students reported struggling to complete schoolwork. Afterwards, students reported greater ability to complete their homework and assignments (97%), improved grades (83%), and a wide range of new digital skills due to laptop access (see Figure 6). 46% of students also reported that having their own laptop has supported them in developing their use of productivity tools (such as Microsoft Word) and 54% identified that they had improved their skills with digital creativity tools.

**Figure 6: *Laptops for Lifelong Learning* students developed an array of new digital skills**

Proportion of students who agreed the laptop helped them develop the specific skill




*Source: WorkVentures (2023).*



# International examples show device access programs can deliver impacts at scale

**Figure 7. International device access programs and their benefits for students**

Since 1993, **Canada's *Computers for Schools Plus*** has collected, refurbished and distributed donated devices to schools, community organisations, Indigenous communities and low-income Canadians. Now serving all ages, and funded by governments as a de-facto national device bank, it has supported over 2 million people. 51% of student participants say they could not have completed schoolwork without the program.[1]



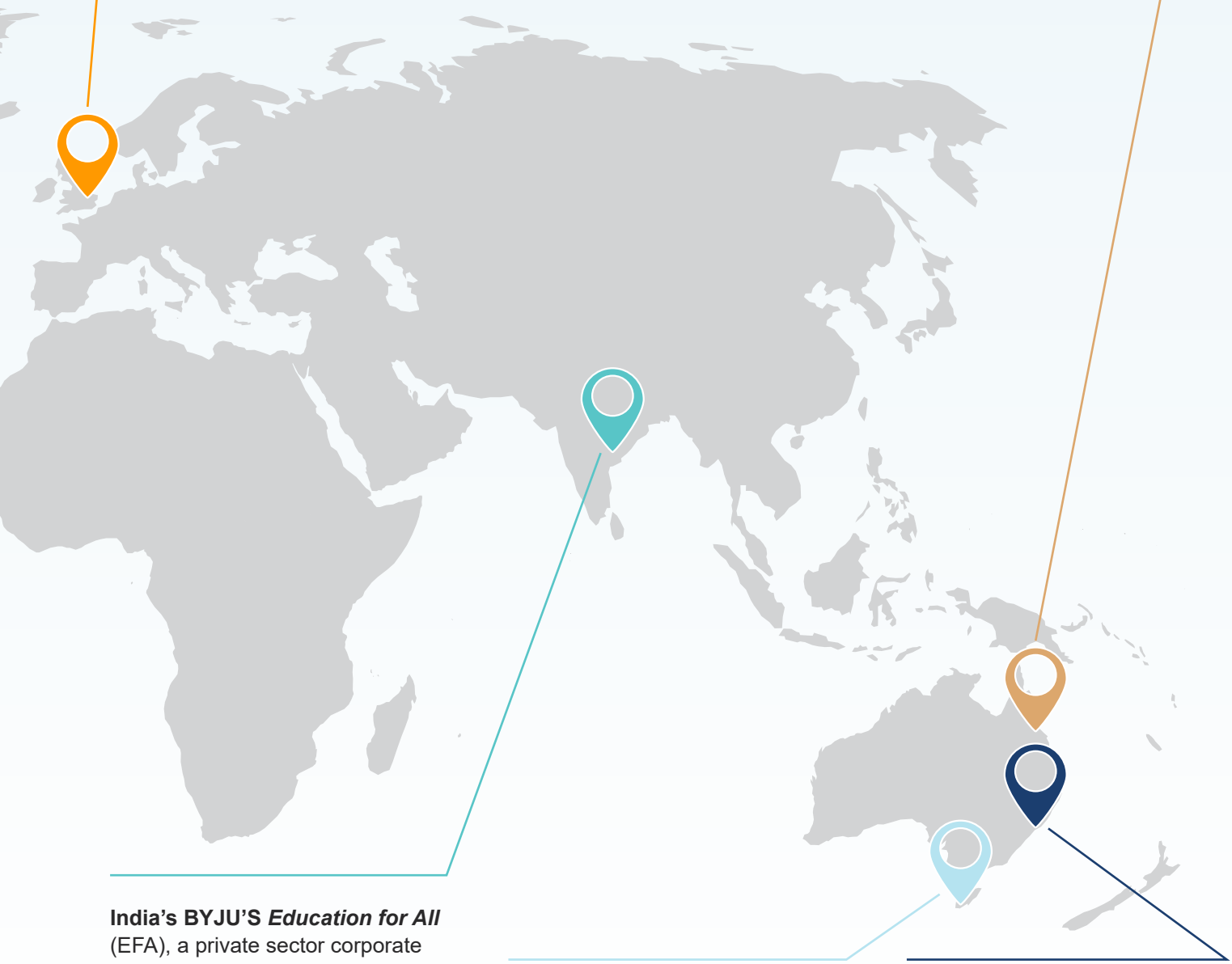
Between 2008 and 2019, **Peru's *One Laptop Per Child*** program delivered over 900,000 laptops to rural primary schools in Peru, particularly in the country's most impoverished regions. An evaluation fund significant improvements in students' computer skills.[2]

Since 2010, **Argentina's Connectar Igualdad** program has distributed laptop computers to all students and teachers at secondary schools, special education schools and government-run teacher training institutions. It has supporting over 4.5 million participants, and delivered a small, but statistically significant, increase in PISA test scores for participating students.[3]

[1] ISEDC (2020a); ISECD (202b). [2] Cuerto, S. et al (2024). [3] Alderete, MV & Formichella, MM 2016. [4] Byju's (2022). [5] Internal WorkVentures data. [6] Internal WorkVentures and The Smith Family data. [7] Crook et al. (2014). [8] Digital Poverty Alliance (2020). [9] Betts et al. (2023).

Between 2022-24, the **UK's *Tech4Schools*** program funded 23 schools to provides 530 disadvantaged students with laptops for school and home use. Increased device use was found to predict self-assessed digital efficacy.[8,9]

Between 2008 and 2013, **Australia's *Digital Education Revolution*** funded schools to provide a laptop for every student in years 9 to 12, with almost 1 million computers installed. Research on the New South Wales roll out found statistically significant benefits for science achievement.[7]



**India's BYJU'S *Education for All*** (EFA), a private sector corporate social responsibility initiative, provides low-income students with smartphones or tablets preloaded with free digital learning content, reaching over 5.5 million students. 57% of recipients report improved academic performance.[4]

In 2025, **WorkVentures** and its partners launched ***Tech4Kids***, which has provided devices and digital capability coaching for over 1000 low-income school students in Tasmania.[5]

**WorkVentures and The Smith Family's *Digital Learning Essentials*** is a targeted intervention providing refurbished laptops and digital capability coaching, for Australian school students who would otherwise go without. It has supported over 11,000 students since 2022.[6]

# Digital access could significantly improve students' future earning potential

## The cost of digital exclusion for current students is potentially over $50 billion in additional nominal lifetime earnings*

Our high-level estimates demonstrate that significant economic benefits are potentially available to students given access to a laptop. Research shows that students who used a device for in-school learning for an hour a day achieved a 25 point (5%) increase in maths testing under the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).[1] Further, a 2016 Australian study found that a 1% increase in PISA scores translates to a 0.12% increase in the students' future hourly wages.[2] Therefore, by using their device for learning for 1 hour daily, device recipients could potentially benefit from a future 0.6% wage increase.



For a worker with the Australian average annual earnings of $82,354 (at May 2026)3 working from age 20 to 67, **the learning benefits could translate to nominal earnings increases of $494 annually and $23,200 in lifetime earnings.***

We can equally explore the benefits of stronger ICT skills that are fostered by device access. For example, in the long-run experimental evaluation of Peru's *One Laptop Per Child* rollout, increased access to personal laptops improved students' digital skills by 0.40 of a standard deviation (a significant increase).[4] Additionally, a 2026 World Bank analysis of job postings found that jobs requiring at least one digital skill offer an average wage premium of 1.3% in wealthier countries.[4]



If device access fosters the computer and internet skills needed for these jobs, **then at average earnings the benefits of these digital skills could translate to nominal earnings increases of $1,070 annually and $50,300 in lifetime earnings.***



If these two wage increase estimates are applied to an estimated 1.1 million Australian students aged 8 to 18 in 2025 who lack access to a learning device,**[6] we calculate that **the potential economic cost of digital exclusion for current students aged 8 to 18 ranges from $26 billion to $56 billion in additional nominal lifetime earnings,*** for that current student group alone (noting, over time more students will reach these ages without device access).

Notes: * Earnings are for all employees (not full time employees). Increases in earnings are expressed in nominal terms, without adjusting for inflation, and are included as indicators of the scale of economic opportunity from digital inclusion.
** Young Australians without a device include 900,000 aged 8-13, and 523,000 aged 14-25 (1.42 million total).
[6] For simplicity, we divided these totals equally between each discrete age.

[1] OECD (2024). [2] Deloitte Access Economics (2016). Note, for PISA literacy, numeracy and science scales, mean = 500 andstandard deviation = 100. [3] ABS (2026). [4] Cuerto, S. et al (2024). [5] Soares Martins Neto, A. et al. (2026). [6] Telstra Foundation (2025b).

# Digital inclusion is also critical to our national prosperity and wellbeing

## Boosting digital literacy would also deliver significant economic and social benefits for the nation

Boosting digital literacy delivers clear economic and social benefits for Australia.

Demand for digital skills already outstrips supply, and without action the gap will continue to constrain employment, productivity and growth. Closing this gap would not only improve workforce participation, but deliver substantial long-term economic returns.



**Australia faces a shortage of 242,000 digitally enabled workers, highlighting unmet demand for digital skills.**[1]



**Digital upskilling is estimated to generate over 40,000 jobs and more than $200 billion in economic activity by 2030.**[2]



**Closing digital skills and ability gaps could deliver a $25 billion productivity uplift by 2035.**[3]

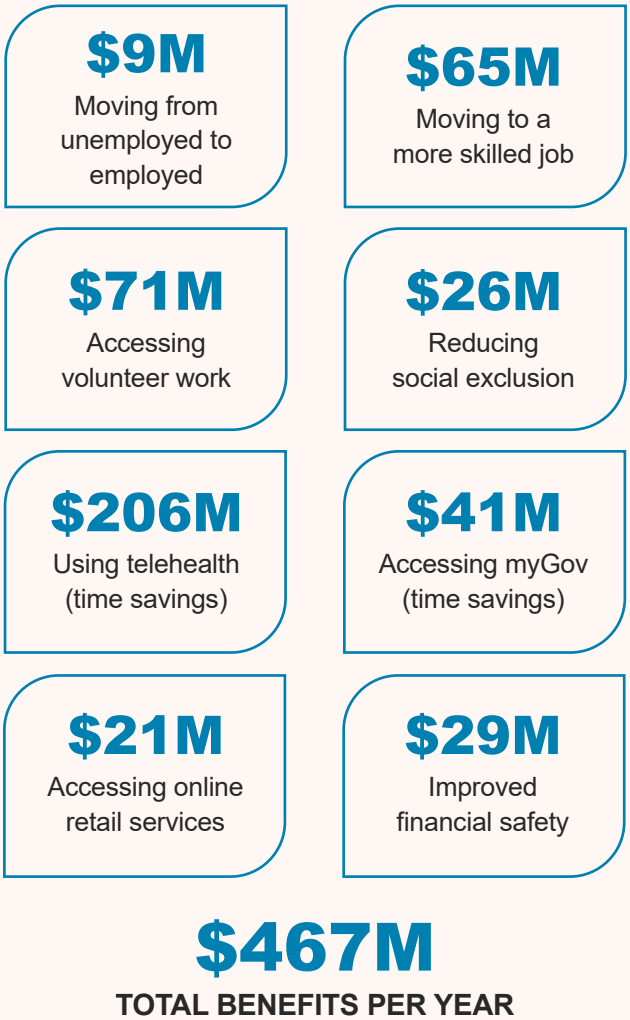


**Insufficient digital training costs Australia $467.2 million per year in forgone social and economic benefits (see Figure 8).**[4]

The benefits extend beyond the economy. Social benefits of digital inclusion are also numerous. For example, improving the ability of people in low-income communities to navigate online resources and e-health platforms has been shown to increase participation in social and health services, strengthen health and wellbeing. Similarly, increasing broadband access in remote Indigenous communities significantly improves access to essential healthcare and education services.

Digital access has been proven to increase individuals' sense of social connection, by providing additional platforms for communication, and helping to build online communities. In addition, improved employment outcomes for at-risk individuals due to increased digital literacy can lead to reduced community crime rates.

**Figure 8. Benefits of increased digital literacy, from analysis by Good Things Australia**

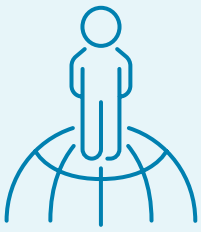



[1] FSO (2025). [2] McKell institute (2021). [3] ACS (2025). [4] GTFA (2024).



# Current initiatives fall short. Our three step blueprint can close the digital divide.

## 1. Establish national digital inclusion infrastructure, incorporating the National Device Bank



**A nationally coordinated approach to digital inclusion would reduce fragmentation and ensure consistent minimum standards across Australia. Leadership by the Australian Government, including a national digital inclusion strategy incorporating the National Device Bank, would provide a roadmap for access and equity across Australia.**

Digital access underpins participation in education, employment and essential services. Digital inclusion support is core enabling infrastructure, alongside education, housing and transport. While policies vary across Australian states and territories, digital access for students should not depend on where they live.

The National Device Bank is central to support Australia's digital inclusion infrastructure as a nationally coordinated device pipeline, enabling scale, efficiency and equity as well as opportunities to embed skill training programs.

## 2. Ensure that connection and technical support is prioritised, not just hardware

**A framework for digital inclusion should include:**

- **Reliable laptop or device**
- **Regular internet access**
- **Technical advice helpline**
- **Support to improve digital skills and develop online safety education.**

The varying and regularly changing policies across Australian states and territories leads to inequitable access, support and outcomes.

Device delivery only goes so far. Students and young people need holisitic support to optimise outcomes and maximise safety.

National alignment would provide clarity, consistency and equity. Delivering on the strategy could include state governments and partners to optimise outcomes for students.

## 3. Prioritise refurbished devices in procurement policies

**Through procurement policies and tender requirements, government leadership can normalise refurbished technology as a high-quality, fit-for-purpose option, strengthening national supply pipelines. Refurbished devices deliver strong value for money, reduce embodied carbon and e-waste, and support Australia's circular economy and emissions targets.**

Procurement policies that prioritise refurbished devices as a preferred option in government and corporate procurement, particularly for education and community programs, have multiple benefits, including cost savings, environmental sustainability and an ongoing pathway to provide devices to communities missing out.

Where new devices are required, procurement could mandate responsible end-of-life pathways through accredited refurbishment programs, including the National Device Bank.



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