



WA
**digital
inclusion**
project

**Lessons learned – bridging the
digital divide**

WACOSS Conference 2025

WA Digital Inclusion Project: Initiatives

Ability



Training and
upskilling
for the sector
and community

Access



Expand access
to the internet
and WADIP
website

Affordability



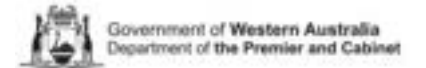
Provide affordable
devices and work
with financial
counsellors

Project Partners

Major Supporter



Digital Partners



Project Partners (cont.)



Contact details

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<https://digitalinclusionwa.org.au/>

Why Digital Inclusion?

Digital Ability has improved nationally, although not for everyone.



9.4%

Highly excluded

The number of Australians who are highly excluded has declined but remains substantial. 9.4% of the Australian population is highly excluded.



5.0

Capital city gap

The persistent divide between capital cities and other parts of the country continues to narrow. **However, the Digital Ability gap, in particular, remains considerable.**



7.5

First Nations digital gap

There is a considerable digital gap between First Nations and non-First Nations people in Australia. **The gap is particularly pronounced between First Nations and non-First Nations people living in remote and very remote locations**

Source: Thomas, J., McCosker, A., Parkinson, S., Hegarty, K., Featherstone, D., Kennedy, J., Holcombe-James, I., Ormond-Parker, L., & Ganley, L. (2023). Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: Australian Digital Inclusion Index: 2023. Melbourne: ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, and Telstra. <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/key-findings-and-next-steps/>

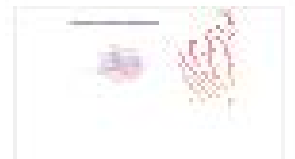
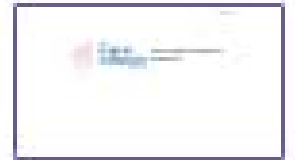
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Why digital inclusion? Scenario



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Picture this...

You've travelled to a small rural town that you've never been to before for work

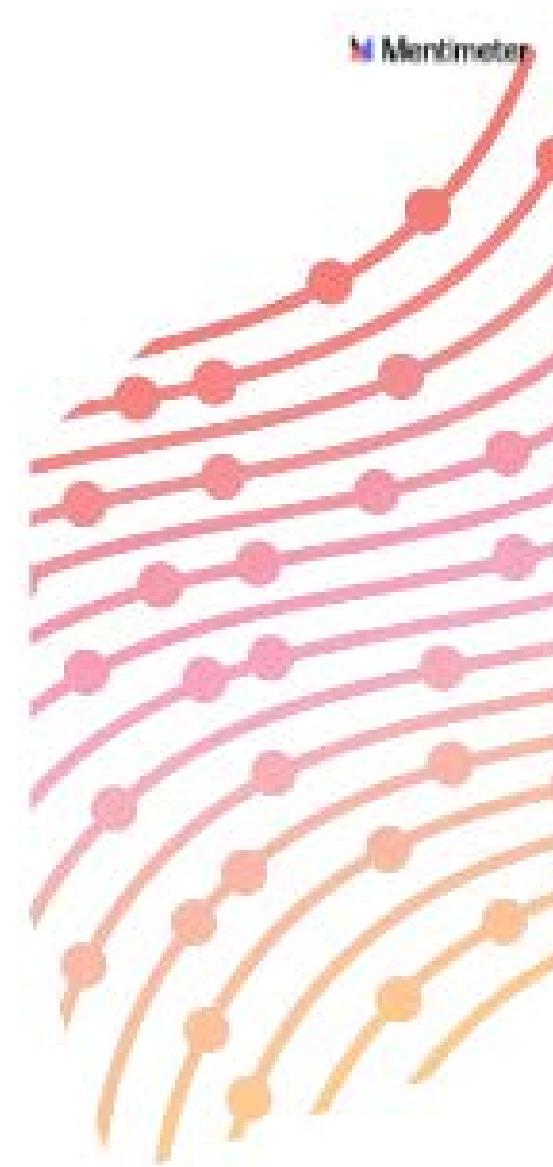
It's been a long day and you're exhausted, you put your head down and go straight to sleep

You wake up in the middle of the night to the sound of heavy rain

You look outside and see that the streets are starting to flood... the water level is rising quickly, and you realise you are at risk.

The power goes out and you are trying to stay calm - you need to find a way to stay informed and safe.

You also need to find out how to connect with emergency services if the situation worsens...



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What is the **first thing** you do to find out more about the flooding and ensure your safety?



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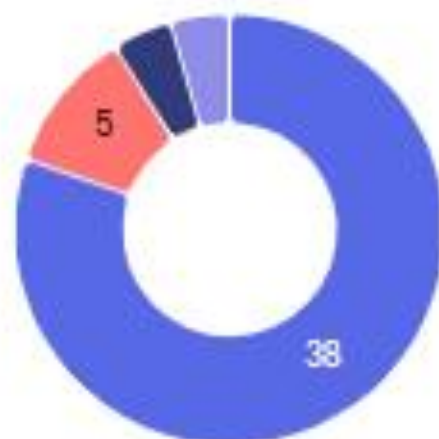
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How do you find the information you need? **What** do you use?



- 38 Search for flood info using your mobile device
- 5 Contact emergency services using a mobile device
- 2 Use your accommodation landline
- 2 Use a battery-powered radio



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To boot...

Wifi is down because of the power outage

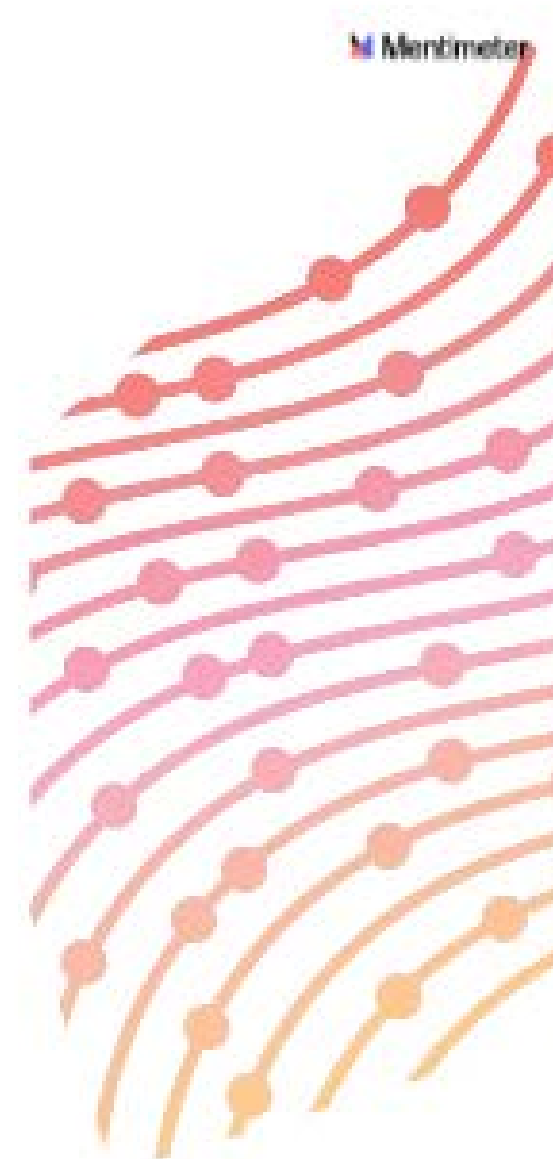
4G/5G mobile networks are also down

You can't access any information about the flooding or contact emergency services as a result, and your mobile phone is useless...

You don't have any cash or means to access your bank account or pay for anything, including a public phone - a satellite phone would have been helpful - but you couldn't afford one

You wander out of your room and find a neighbour who hands you a brand new device that you've never seen before and says there's an app on there that can help and walks off

You have no idea how to use this device...



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How would you feel in this scenario?



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What steps would you take next to get yourself to safety?



- 27 Try and find someone who can help
- 18 Try to figure out the device you've been handed
- 2 Try to remember how to get to a service that could help (hospital, etc.)
- 1 Give up
- 0 Other



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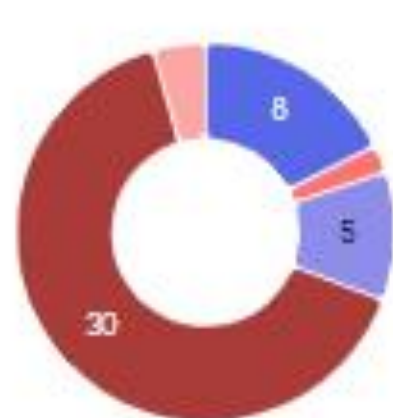
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What do you think was the biggest barrier to accessing critical information/safety in this scenario?



- 8 Lack of access to connectivity
- 1 Inability to afford a satellite phone for emergencies
- 0 Inability to access money
- 5 Inability to use the device you were handed
- 30 All of the above
- 2 Something else entirely



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Lessons learned



Access, Ability, Affordability strongly linked



Digital inclusion \neq one size fits all

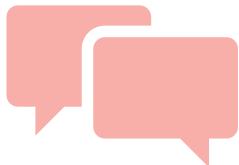


Holistic and targeted approaches essential

Achievement highlights



- **300+** front line community service workers trained
- **45** Community Champions trained (since Pilot began in July 2024)
- **1000+** members of the community reached in **10 languages** with eSafety and digital upskilling sessions through the Champions Program.
- **84** scholarship recipients have undertaken one or two credentialed training offerings; skills to gain employment or skills for employment
- **301** Access and Affordability pilot participants received 12-months free internet
- **497** Access and Affordability pilot participants received a laptop
- **11** Community Resource Centres participating in newly launched CRC Champions program



What's next?



**WADIP Phase 2 – Lotterywest
funded for 18 months July 2025
– December 2027**



**Lessons learned and
engagement to understand and
address individual barriers**



**Collaboration with partners and
diverse communities**



**Focus on ability and pathways
to access/affordability to
bridge the digital divide**

Thank you!



digitalinclusionwa.org.au



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