

Working together to provide the community with equitable access to digital services, skills and tools

Why Smart Public Housing?

Digital access is a core function of modern life. The onset of COVID-19 has amplified the importance of recognising access as a basic human right. As business, government and education have moved online, connectivity has become essential to enable:

- People to work from home and keep economies afloat
- Students to learn remotely and maintain their education
- Health agencies to disseminate vital information
- Families and friends to keep in touch
- Individuals to access critical services

Our approach

We have established a Smart Public Housing Working Group connecting council, government, not-for-profit and industry. The group is leading the Smart Public Housing Project to address digital access barriers and provide opportunities for everyone to participate in the digital world. We aim to:

- Expand availability of inclusive digital education
- Foster employability and job readiness opportunities
- Expand participation in computer recycling programs that repurpose devices for use by low-income residents
- Investigate digital connectivity within public housing
- Influence retail service providers to expand low-cost internet options

Unfortunately, not everyone is able to engage in the digital world. COVID-19 has highlighted a digital divide that is particularly evident within our public housing communities. Yarra has Victoria's largest public housing population with 8,000 residents across 5,000 dwellings. Data suggests significant numbers are being excluded by barriers to connectivity including:

- Access to affordable internet
- Access to fit-for-purpose devices
- Access to digital training and skills

We are also investigating several pilot initiatives including:

- A Community Connections Hub linking people with internet access, device libraries, computer technician support, first language digital literacy training, pathways guidance counselling and e-waste recycling
- The provision of free WiFi in the communal areas of the Richmond Housing Estate to support digital access and digital literacy objectives

These pilots will enable us to test the effectiveness and sustainability of solutions and increase opportunities to share the benefits of digital inclusion with more public housing communities.

Project benefits snapshot



Addressing key issues.
Social justice, digital and economic equity



Employer visibility.
Linking employers with skilled residents



Place activation.
Reinvigorating under utilised retail spaces



Job creation.
Upskilling across range of digital subject areas

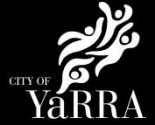


Wellbeing outcomes.
Reducing isolation via social connections



Building partnerships.
Connecting people to improve digital outcomes





This is a smart partnership project involving

- Advocacy and Engagement
- Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House (external partner)
- Carringbush Adult Education (external partner)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (external partner)
- Economic Development
- NBN Co (external partner)
- Social Strategy and Community Development
- Yarra CityLab
- Yarra Libraries

Connect with us

Please contact us to learn more about this project and others like it. We look forward to connecting with you as we progress Yarra Council's Smart City Approach.

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