

MEDIA RELEASE

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Free laptops ensuring students are not left behind

There have been more than 700 applications in the past few months for free laptops that will be provided to 1000 students through a partnership between TasNetworks, WorkVentures, TasCOSS and Anglicare.

The *Tech4Kids TAS – No child left behind* program, which has been possible with funding support from TasNetworks and the Tasmanian Community Fund (TCF), is aimed at helping digitally excluded students across the state access the technology and skills they need to thrive.

TCF Chairperson Kym Goodes said the three main barriers to digital inclusion in education are access, affordability and digital ability.

“The funds provided by the TCF and partner organisations will help directly tackle these barriers by allowing more children to have access to affordable technology” she said.

“Removing barriers to education, such as digital barriers, are critical to ensuring more children are able to engage with learning and achieve better educational outcomes.”

TasNetworks Executive Digital, Strategy and Customer Andrew Davis said the program was all about taking action to address the digital divide in Tasmania by providing laptops, internet plans, coaching and tech support to students in need.

“The fact that this program only started a few months ago and has already received more than 700 applications demonstrates that there is a definite demand in the community,” he said.

“There’s no doubt about the difference access to technology can make and I’m sure the students will take full advantage of having laptops to help aid their study.”

WorkVentures Chief Executive Officer Caroline McDaid said Tasmanian young people face higher levels of digital exclusion than anywhere else in Australia and *Tech4Kids TAS – No child left behind* aims to help change that.

“We believe every Tasmanian child has the right to a quality, holistic education and the opportunities afforded through connection to the digital world. Unfortunately, right now, this is not the case,” she said.

TasCOSS CEO, Adrienne Picone, said one-in-four Tasmanians faced barriers to digital inclusion and 54,000 Tasmanians were unable to get online or navigate the online world.

“Digital exclusion leads to other forms of disadvantage, including limited access to education, employment opportunities, health care, government services and social connections,” she said.

“The digital economy can deliver huge social and economic benefits, so it is essential our young people are not left behind in various aspects of life due to barriers to online access.”

Jodie Stokes, General Manager Community Services, Anglicare Tasmania agreed and said the program was already receiving positive feedback from students.

“Tech4Kids project is important to Anglicare because it enables children to do their homework and keep connected with school,” she said.

This project is a holistic two-year digital uplift program supporting up to 1000 Tasmanian primary and high school children with essentials for continued engagement in digital learning.

“A recent Telstra Foundation report estimated that 30% of students don’t have access to a laptop at home, which is the joint highest in Australia with Queensland, and 4% higher than national average,” Ms McDaid said.ⁱ

“This highlights the need for laptops for learning as students return to school, particularly as when students don’t have adequate access to a computer, 84% of them have trouble keeping up with schoolwork.”ⁱⁱ

The *Tech4Kids TAS – No child left behind program* is thanks to the support of the TCF and was seen as a key opportunity to highlight the need for more organisations and government bodies to support the device gap for students through either funding or device donations.

“Thanks to our partnership with WorkVentures, TasCOSS and Anglicare we are going to make change and help address this real issue,” Mr Davis said.

“We’d encourage more businesses and government bodies to support the initiative as it will help to transform young people’s lives.”

Key Features of the Program

- **Free Laptops:** WorkVentures will be distributing the refurbished laptops pre-loaded with essential educational software.
- **Education Support :**
 - Half hour coaching call to setup and begin using the laptops effectively.
 - Raising awareness of the School Student Broadband Initiative, an Australian Government program offering free NBN home internet access to up to 30,000 qualifying families and carers until the 30 June 2028.
- **Technical Support :**
 - Ongoing tech support to address any issues with the devices for 12 months.

- **Eligibility:** Students in Years 5-12 who lack access to a laptop.

For more information please contact your supporting not-for-profit organisation directly, or James Ryan on 0490 532 994 or via email james.ryan@workventures.com.au

For media inquiries, please contact

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ⁱ [Telstra Foundation launches new index reporting on the digital lives of young people | Telstra](#)

ⁱⁱ [Measuring the impact of technology donations](#)