



Collinsville Connect Telecentre



Who are we

The Collinsville Connect Telecentre is the heart of a small rural community with ongoing IT needs. Since 2001, the small not for profit has delivered on its mission to provide affordable IT services for Collinsville and Scottville locals, the hinterland of the Whitsunday Coast.

Our Centre is unique. The community can use our computers for free, we fix and sell computers and we embrace anything IT. Students come to hang out and play online games after school, we do job skills training for job seekers and the local mining company, QCoal-Thiess use us to deliver staff induction programs. We're also a technology lifeline for older residents, which is the area where Telstra helped so much.

What we needed

We started with two years of funding from "Networking the Nation" a federal govt initiative. Other telecentres around the country closed but thanks to the council, the mines and Telstra we're still going strong. Over the past 22 years, the CCT has racked up an impressive 1,300 training courses, 144,440 student hours, 114,800 customers helped (over 5,460 a year) and 8,890 mine site inductions. Even a history book on Collinsville, which has so far sold 1,400 copies.

How we got there

Older residents tend to react against technology. COVID forced change through the need to use QR Codes and the increase of online scams have made many Collinsville locals even more cautious about technology. We show them how tech can help in a way that gently slides them into the experience rather than pushes them. This is why the Thursday Senior Sessions are super flexible.

The hot topic at the moment is scams. We listen to what they've experienced and go through different scenarios so they can know what to look for and what to do, which always means not clicking any links in emails.

Why it worked

The Senior Sessions are very social. For most participants it's the best day of the week and there's always a homemade cake or two on offer and we focus on how technology can be fun.

For example, we help seniors use Google Photos to create photo albums. At the end of every year they make an album to give as a Christmas present. We also help them design their own calendars they can print, laminate and pop on their fridge. This kind of thing really helps older people understand that the digital world is a way to do things they've always done, sometimes even better.

Where to next

One of our ongoing issues is making sure we have great staff. It's a classic challenge in country towns where there are only so many locals to help out. Grants funding enables us to employ staff rather than rely on volunteers. Our biggest success story in recent years is welcoming 26 year-old Jamaine to the team.

Jamaine is a highly skilled 3D modeller with deep IT knowledge who was once one of the kids who came to play online games after school. Later, he was later placed with us by job-seeking agency and is now vital to our everyday operations. People love Jamaine because he's a 'tech head' with a very gentle and patient manner.

The Telstra Connected Communities Grant Program

Applications for the 2024 Telstra Connected Communities grant program on Tuesday 27th of February and will close at 5pm on Wednesday 27th of March 2024. This round will make \$200,000 available for applications of up to \$10,000 each. Successful grants will be announced in June 2024 and successful applicants will have 12 months to complete funded projects.

Learn more about the 2024 Connected Communities grant round here

<https://frrr.org.au/funding/place/telstra-connected-communities-program/>