



# Tech, Tea and Tales

in Nillumbik Shire Council  
Program evaluation  
July 2019

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## Introduction and objectives

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Lively and Humankind Enterprises are two social enterprises with a vision of a future in which young and older people feel fully valued, included and supported in their communities. In 2016, Lively and Humankind Enterprises came together to create *Tech, Tea and Tales*; an innovative intergenerational program that trains and employs young jobseekers to help older people learn how to use technology to connect with friends, family and their interests, and to record their life stories and experiences on film.

In 2018, Nillumbik Shire Council approached Lively and Humankind Enterprises with a view to bringing the program to the Nillumbik community. Together, Nillumbik Shire Council, Lively and Humankind Enterprises applied for funding to the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, and obtained a grant to fund the delivery of a 5-week program at St Andrews Community Centre. The program objectives were as follows:

- Building community resilience by supporting community-based skill and capability development.
- Redressing disadvantage caused by remoteness through increasing community connection and reducing social isolation/loneliness.
- Encouraging positive ageing and building an age friendly community, by facilitating intergenerational connection and providing opportunities for lifelong learning for older community members.
- Supporting psychosocial recovery from the Black Saturday Bushfires that affected the community 10 years ago, by creating spaces for people to share their stories and connect over shared experience.

For the young and older program participants, the program had several specific objectives:

Young people	Older people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Employability skills development and enhanced employability.</li><li>● Meaningful employment that enhances their sense of value, purpose and contribution to the community, and which increases their confidence and self-esteem.</li><li>● Increased empathy, understanding and appreciation of older individuals, and more positive attitudes to ageing.</li><li>● Increased skills in active-empathic listening, and confidence in intergenerational connection.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased social connection to the community, and enhanced sense of value and meaning through the recording and documentation of life stories and experiences.</li><li>● Expanded opportunities to connect and engage with friends, family, interests and information through technology.</li></ul>

## Running the program

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Funded by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, the program was run as a partnership between Humankind Enterprises, Lively, Nillumbik Shire Council and the St Andrews Community Centre.

Five young people were recruited, trained and employed as ‘Tech and Story Helpers’ for the program, and 27 older community members participated. Participants were members of the local community area, and were recruited through a range of channels (see ‘Participant Recruitment’ below). The key stages of the program are shown below.



Participant recruitment	<p>Older participants were engaged through local advertisement, including through the St Andrews Community Centre, St Andrews Men’s Shed and Council mailing lists. As the St Andrew’s Men’s Shed was located next to the Community Centre, members of the Men’s Shed were encouraged during the program to come across to the Centre and join in the program. Many took up this opportunity.</p> <p>Participants came to the program for various reasons. Many had particular technology questions they were keen to explore (e.g. a device they weren’t sure how to use, or an idea of something they’d like to learn), while others came simply to explore or to share stories and experiences with younger community members. Some came with an interest in participating in both aspects of the program (technology and stories).</p>
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## Helper selection and training

Tech and Story Helper positions were advertised online via Indeed and social media, as well as through the Nillumbik Shire Council. Eight applications for the roles were received, and helpers were selected based on their demonstrated interest in working with older people, awareness and empathy of the challenges that older people may experience when using technology, and level of need for a paid employment opportunity (young people with less previous experience and more immediate need for employment were prioritised). Shortlisted young people took part in an interview to assess their suitability for the role.

Once selected, the helpers took part in a half-day training session run by Lively and Humankind Enterprises staff to equip them for their role. The training session focused on:

- Understanding the context for the Tech, Tea and Tales program and the social challenges it aims to solve.
- Unearthing and challenging assumptions and stereotypes of older community members.
- Understanding older people's experiences of using technology, and learning techniques for teaching technology effectively (including introduction to adult learning principles).
- How to elicit and record life stories, including technical briefing and practice using the program's recording equipment.

## Welcome afternoon tea

Immediately following the Helper training session, an introductory afternoon tea was held with older program participants, providing an opportunity for young and older participants to meet each other ahead of the program start date. The gathering also provided a chance for older participants to ask any initial questions about the program and what they could expect. The session was facilitated by Humankind Enterprises and Lively staff.

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## Weekly sessions

Two weekly sessions were held over a five-week period, during which each older participant worked one-on-one with their assigned young helper for one hour each. Sessions were flexible and directed by the older participants and their young helpers. Some participants worked on technology questions throughout the program, whereas others moved on to recording stories after getting answers to their initial technology questions.

Young helpers worked primarily with the same older people each week, except for when participants could not attend a particular week. When participants were not available, young participants either joined in to support another participant or worked with members of the Men's Shed next door to the Centre, who were often open to participating.

Some young participants were more confident with either Android or Apple devices, and so in some cases swapped participants in order to work with an older person whose technology questions and needs they could best answer/meet.

Sessions were supervised by a Council staff member, and some weeks were also attended by a Humankind Enterprises staff member to provide oversight and support. A debrief was held with each participant at the end of the 5-week period to explore their experience in the program and the outcomes they had experienced.

## Community celebration

A community celebration was held to share the video stories recorded by participants throughout the program, and to celebrate the learning and connections formed during the program.

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## Program outcomes

### Evaluation methodology

Prior to the delivery of the program, an outcome framework was developed to identify the intended program outcomes. These intended outcomes were as follows:

Young people	Older people	Nillumbik Shire community
Young people feel an increased sense of contribution and value to the community.	Older people feel reduced fear and anxiety and increased confidence regarding technology.	Helping redress disadvantage caused by remoteness by increasing social and community connection and reducing isolation.
Young people have improved employability skills (communication, interpersonal skills, initiative, self-management, problem solving, digital skills).	Older people have improved digital skills and increased motivation to continue learning.	Providing community-based social activity that connects residents to the Community Centre (opening up opportunities for them to get involved in a variety of other recreational and physical activities).
Young people have increased confidence and self-esteem.	Older people use technology more often to pursue interests and access entertainment, manage daily affairs and communicate with others.	Developing skills of older people in the use of technology.
Young people have improved empathy and emotional intelligence.	Older people feel increased social connection.	Intergenerational activity, breaking down barriers between generations and increasing understanding and appreciation of older people.
Young people are more aware and respectful of older community members, and are more likely to challenge ageist attitudes and behaviours in society.	Older people feel more seen and valued in the community, and more connected to younger generations.	Fostering community development by increasing social participation and lifelong learning for older people
		Encouraging positive ageing by reducing social isolation and developing skills of older people that enable them to 'age in place'.

		Supporting long-term psycho-social recovery from the Black Saturday Bush Fires by bringing together older people and providing the opportunity to share their story/connect over shared experiences.
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To determine the experience of participants and the impact of the program in relation to these intended outcomes, the following evaluation activities were undertaken:

- Pre- and post-program surveys with the young employees, measuring active-empathic listening skills, interpersonal skills, core skills for work, self-perception (including confidence and self-esteem) and attitudes to ageing (see Appendix I: Young employee pre-program survey and Appendix II: Young employee post-program survey).
- End of program digitally recorded interviews with young employees regarding their experience during the program (see interview questions in Appendix III: Young employee end of program interview questions).
- An end of program interview with Katie Camilleri, Community Development Officer – Positive Ageing, Nillumbik Shire Council (see interview questions in Appendix IV: Nillumbik Shire Council end of program interview questions).
- Post-program surveys with the older participants, measuring changes in technology skills, sense of personal value and levels of community and intergenerational connectedness (see Appendix V: Older participant post-program survey).
- Reflections from the program facilitators, Lively and Humankind Enterprises.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques have been used to analyse the data against the program objectives, and to reflect on the participant experiences. This report discusses the findings of this evaluation analysis, supported by direct participant quotes to further illustrate the outcomes. The report should be considered in conjunction with the program highlight video.



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## Outcomes

### Young people

#### Intended outcomes

Young people feel an increased sense of contribution and value to the community.

Young people have improved employability skills (communication, interpersonal skills, initiative, self-management, problem solving, digital skills).

Young people have increased confidence and self-esteem.

Young people have improved empathy and emotional intelligence.

Young people are more aware and respectful of older community members, and are more likely to challenge ageist attitudes and behaviours in society.

100%

Felt that they were making a greater contribution to the community as a result of the program.

100%

Increased their confidence and self-esteem.

100%

Increased their empathy and communication skills.

100%

Increased their awareness of and respect for older community members.

### Sense of contribution and value to community

The young people who participated in the program had various motivations for applying for the role, but all identified 'helping others' or 'giving back to the community' as part of their reason for applying. For many, getting involved with the program was their first experience of contributing to community programs, or the first time they had engaged with the local Community Centre and older residents. Survey results showed that **100% of the young participants felt that they were making a greater contribution to their community** as a result of participating in the program, and participants commented during end-of-program interviews that the satisfaction of helping older people in the program was one of the most significant aspects of their experience. Furthermore, 50% of the young participants stated that they now felt more aware of their own skills and what they have to offer others than before the program (the remaining 50% indicated that they were 'somewhat' more aware), indicating that the program built young participants' awareness of their own strengths and value to the community.

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*"The most standout thing has been how appreciative older people are for me just sharing the knowledge I've grown up with and that's just in my head – how appreciative they are for me sharing and teaching something that comes naturally to me. I'm happy leaving each day when they're like 'thank you, you've helped me so much' and it's like 'yes, I've done something good'".*

- Young participant

*"I think it would be nice to get more involved in community stuff, because it really has been nice this program. I just need to get out there and find out what else there is I can do".*

- Young participant

## Employability skills

The program aimed to develop the employability skills of young people by providing a supported environment in which to practice and develop transferable skills. In particular, the program aimed to support young people to develop their time management, problem solving, initiative and digital skills; skills that are identified by the [Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework](#) as some of the key non-technical skills needed to function successfully in the modern workforce. Participant surveys indicated that **100% of participants felt that the program had improved their initiative** and ability to think on their feet, while **75% felt that they had improved their time management, problem solving and digital skills**. The program also had a significant impact on young participants' interpersonal and communication skills (see 'Empathy and emotional intelligence' below).

*"The most significant change for me is that I've never really had a proper job, so you could say this is my first job – to feel what a workplace is like and what it is to associate with other people in the workplace and put yourself out there and develop those skills".*

- Young participant

*"At first I had this dread of what I'd do if I didn't know the answer or didn't know what to do. But I did seem to find myself problem solving".*

- Young participant

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## Confidence and self-esteem

A key aim of the Tech, Tea and Tales program is to build the confidence and self-esteem of young people by highlighting their own value and the difference they can make to others in the community. The program also seeks to achieve this outcome by connecting young people to older people who may provide informal mentoring, affirmation and support to young people during the program itself. The program had a clear positive impact on the confidence and self-esteem of young participants; **100% stated that they had increased their confidence and self-esteem as a result of participating in the program.**

*"It increased my confidence a bit. Because normally with jobs you come in not knowing what you're doing and you have to work it out, so it gave me confidence that I can do that".*

- Young participant

## Empathy and emotional intelligence

Young participants in the program were able to develop their interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and empathy by engaging in one-to-one conversations and relationships with people outside their normal social sphere, and by adopting the unique position of both teaching/instructing *and* actively eliciting and listening to the stories and experiences of others. **100% of young participants stated that they had improved their skills in initiating and maintaining a conversation, and in empathising with others<sup>1</sup>.** 100% also felt that they had build patience, while 75% felt that they had improved their ability to communicate clearly. 50% felt that they had improved their ability to provide clear instructions.

*"People skills was another big thing I built in this program"*

- Young participant

*"I didn't think I could hold a conversation with them very easily – I thought there wouldn't be much to talk about. But it's so much easier than I thought and that's changed a lot for me".*

- Young participant

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the Likert scale measurement of empathy (against which 100% of participants agreed that they had improved their empathic skills), empathy was also measured in pre- and post-surveys using the scale shown in Appendix I: Young employee pre-program survey and Appendix II: Young employee post-program survey. This scale measures an individual's overall empathic skills, and not all indicators were directly relevant to the expected outcomes of the Tech, Tea and Tales program. There was some significant variation between participants' pre- and post-program survey responses, but meaningful conclusions could not be drawn from these patterns of variance. It is likely that this result was due to the broader nature of the indicator statements, and the lesser direct relation of some statements to the skills and experience developed through the Tech, Tea and Tales program.

## Awareness and respect for older community members

A central outcome of the Tech, Tea and Tales program was its impact on participants' sense of intergenerational connection, understanding and respect. For most of the young participants in the program, their only significant interactions with older people prior to the program had been with their own grandparents and family members. Through the program, young people had the opportunity to get to know older participants on a personal level, hearing their life stories and experiences and recording these on film. **100% of young participants stated that they had an increased awareness of older people at the end of the program, increased respect for older community members, and were more likely to recognise ageism when they saw it in the community.** 75% also felt that they were more likely to challenge ageism when they witnessed it<sup>2</sup>. These are significant outcomes that demonstrate the program's potential power to break down intergenerational divisions and stereotypes, and to build a more age-friendly community.

*"When you think about older people, and this is just going to be honest, you don't think about people who have similar interests to you or you don't think about people who may love the same things as you or share as many commonalities as we ended up sharing... there's this stereotype for instance that older generations don't believe in climate change and don't want to do anything about it and don't believe in young people because they think they're crazy or something – and this program has just changed my perspective on that – I don't agree with it at all. Just in general, meeting these people who I share so many common interests with – maybe it's just me and I have an old soul that I've only just now discovered, or maybe it's just that we're not all as different as we think we are". -*

Young participant

*"The most unexpected thing has probably been just how easy it is to get along with the older people. Because you kind of think that we're separate, but in the end we are just human"*

- Young participant

*"The realisation that the older people around us have all been a teenager at some point, they've all made silly decisions, they've all been through life just as I'm at the beginning – that's the biggest realisation I've had. It's kind of stood out just hearing all these different stories about where people have been, some of which I would not expect to come out of an older person's mouth!"*

- Young participant

<sup>2</sup> One respondent indicated that they were not more likely to challenge ageism, however the survey did not yield information to enable speculation as to why this was the case.

## Older people

### Intended outcomes

Older people feel reduced fear and anxiety and increased confidence regarding technology.

Older people have improved digital skills and increased motivation to continue learning.

Older people use technology more often to pursue interests and access entertainment, manage daily affairs and communicate with others.

Older people feel increased social connection.

Older people feel more seen and valued in the community, and more connected to younger generations.

100%

Felt that they improved their digital skills and understanding.

93%

Increased their motivation to continue learning more digital skills.

80%

Felt more positive about young people in the community as a result of the program.

100%

Felt valued and respected during their time in the program.

### Technology confidence and skills

Research has shown that one of the primary barriers to older people's adoption and use of new technology is fear, anxiety and lack of confidence. And, indeed, many of the program participants felt this way at the start of the program. While most came to the program with a device of their own, most reported lacking confidence with the device, and shared that they were often anxious that they might 'break it' when using it. For most, this anxiety and lack of confidence was the major barrier standing in the way of using their device more frequently and productively. The 1:1 tuition and support provided by the young helpers, however, successfully built participants' confidence and skills. At the end of the program, **100% of participants stated that they had improved digital skills and understanding, and 94% stated that they felt more confident when using their device.** 88% felt less anxious or fearful.

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*"When I came I didn't know anything about my little gadget, but now I have a lot of experience. And it was written down for me which was helpful as my memory is not always great"*

- Older participant

*"Some of them came in knowing nothing at the start and the most unexpected thing was how fast they learned and how much they knew by the end of the six weeks. I thought it would be slower!"*

- Young participant

## Technology motivation

In addition to building confidence and skills, the program also had a significant impact on building participants' interest and motivation to continue learning and using technology more. 93% stated that they felt more motivated to continue learning more about technology as a result of the program. For many, their motivation was enhanced by discovering the many possible uses of their device - many of which had not been known to them before, and were introduced by their helper.

## Technology use

When asked how they would use the new technology skills they had developed during the program, the majority **(73%) stated that they would now use technology to communicate more often with friends, family and wider community members. 80% also indicated that they would use technology more often to pursue their interests.** Communication and pursuing interests were the most popular intended uses of technology for participants, supporting the hypothesis that building older people's digital skills can improve social connectedness, reduce the risk of isolation and foster ongoing mental stimulation and enjoyment of daily life. 67% of participants also stated that they would now use technology more often to find information and services, and 53% intended to use technology more often to access entertainment. A relatively smaller proportion of participants intended to use technology more often to manage daily affairs (e.g. bill payments, etc.). This outcome is unsurprising given that these uses of technology were not the primary focus of the program<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Research by Monash University's BehaviourWorks ([available here](#)) also suggests that people who are new or irregular users of technology tend to build skills and confidence by using technology for social and leisure purposes first, with more complex digital tasks like payments and managing daily affairs coming later (once the individual has further built their skills and their level of comfort).

## Social connection

The program had an impact on older participants' sense of social connection in two key ways; firstly, by building their capacity to connect and communicate through technology, and secondly, by connecting participants to their young helper and to other program participants. 73% indicated that they would use technology to connect more often with others after the program, and **75% of participants indicated that they felt more connected to others as a result of the program**. Several participants noted that they had shared phone numbers with their helper or with other program participants, and that they planned to keep in touch beyond the program. Many also remarked that they enjoyed the friendly social atmosphere of the sessions, during which they had the opportunity to meet and connect with other program participants in addition to their young helper.

*"The program was great. I have kids out of state so it's important to communicate with them. I have to do something every day to practice."*

- Older participant

## Connection to community and younger generations

Before participating in the Tech, Tea and Tales program, only 13% of older participants reported that they interacted with young people in the community on a regular basis. Conversely, 27% of participants 'never' interacted with young people in the community, and 20% did so 'rarely'.

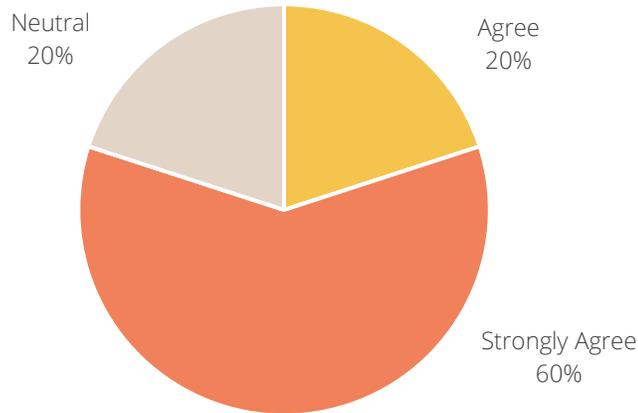
Survey responses indicated that the program had had a significant impact on older people's feeling of connection to younger people in the community, and their attitudes towards them. **100% of participants strongly agreed that they enjoyed spending time with their young Tech and Story Helper**, and 93% felt that they had an increased understanding of younger generations as a result of their involvement in the program.

**80% also reported that they felt more positive about younger people in the community** (anecdotal feedback indicated that those who did not report feeling more positively already felt positive before the program). These outcomes demonstrate the dual effect of the Tech, Tea and Tales program on intergenerational connection and understanding; both young *and* older participants demonstrated increased understanding and respect for each other as a result of the program.

*"It was a wonderful way of both connecting with someone from a different generation and learning new skills at the same time"*

- Older participant

Spending time with my Tech and Story Helper has made me feel more positive about younger people in my community



In addition to shifting attitudes and perceptions towards younger community members, the program also had an impact on older people’s own sense of value and contribution in the community. 81% stated that the program reminded them of the skills and experience they have to share with others (including younger generations) and 100% felt that their Lively helper also learned from them during the program. Importantly, **100% stated that they felt valued and respected during their time in the program.**

### Nillumbik Shire Community

#### Intended outcomes

Helping redress disadvantage caused by remoteness by increasing social and community connection and reducing isolation.	Outcomes reported above
Providing community-based social activity that connects residents to the Community Centre (opening up opportunities for them to get involved in a variety of other recreational and physical activities).	Discussion below
Developing skills of older people in the use of technology.	Outcomes reported above
Intergenerational activity, breaking down barriers between generations and increasing understanding and appreciation of older people.	Outcomes reported above
Fostering community development by increasing social participation and lifelong learning for older people	Outcomes reported above
Encouraging positive ageing by reducing social isolation and developing skills	Outcomes reported above



of older people that enable them to 'age in place'.	
Supporting long-term psycho-social recovery from the Black Saturday Bush Fires by bringing together older people and providing the opportunity to share their story/connect over shared experiences.	Discussed below

### Connecting local residents to the Community Centre and community

A secondary goal of the Tech, Tea and Tales program was to increase community use and awareness of the St Andrews Community Centre; a fantastic community space and resource. Prior to engaging in the program, young participants stated that they had **never** been to or used the Community Centre, and 68% of older participants had never attended the Centre (32% attended 'occasionally'). Several participants noted that they would now be more likely to come back to the Centre and use the space again now that they were aware of its facilities. Some older participants were also able to share stories with younger participants about the history of the Centre and what the site used to look like in the past before the Centre was built, helping young participants build greater connection to the history of their local community area.

*"I obviously understood that older people have lived these lives and had many connections with places, things and people, but there was one person in particular – we were talking and the things that she knows about this community, the Nillumbik community, Eltham... a place that I've lived for about 15 years now, and the things that she taught me I would never have thought of or known. I didn't realise that people would know so much! To meet these people who have really stayed here and are connected and are willing to show that has been really great". - Young participant*

### Psycho-social recovery from the Black Saturday Bushfires

It was hoped that the Tech, Tea and Tales program may provide an opportunity for older people who had experienced or been affected by the Black Saturday Bushfires (which significantly affected the Nillumbik Shire community in 2009) to share and record their stories, promoting psycho-social recovery. In practice, only one survey respondent reported sharing stories of their experiences during the Black Saturday Fires as part of the program. The reason for this is unclear, however it is possible that participants preferred not to dwell on and record negative memories and experiences (this, however, is an assumption). Given that the program created a very safe and open space for older people to share deeply personal stories and experiences, it is also possible that many older participants simply did not feel a need to share or process this experience through storytelling. The evaluation suggests that the program did not have a significant impact in this intended outcome area.



## Satisfaction

Overall, participants indicated a high degree of satisfaction with their experience in the program. 100% of participants reported that they were 'extremely satisfied' with their experience, and many commented and reflected during the community celebration event on how positive it had been. A number of participants suggested that the program should be replicated or continued, indicating that the program had been highly successful from the perspective of participants.

*"Thank you Nullimbik. I just think it's been so wonderful for me. We have all gained so much out of it"* - Older participant

*"It was a new initiative. Never heard of it before but it was extremely worthwhile. Hope both parties have benefited - it was very good for me".*

- Older participant

*"I'm very grateful; teachers and organizers were kind and extremely competent".*

- Older participant

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# Successes and challenges

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## Successes and enablers

Overall, the delivery of the program was very successful. Particular successes and enabling factors of the program included:

- \* **Helper recruitment and training:** The young people employed for the program were reliable and consistent throughout the program, and the training delivered by Lively and Humankind Enterprises prior to beginning their work proved effective in ensuring that young participants had the skills and mindsets required for their role. Older participants reported that the young people were friendly, patient and calm throughout the delivery of technology help, and all strongly agreed that they had enjoyed spending time with their helper during the program.
- \* **Participant recruitment:** The program received a good number of registrations for the program from older community members, demonstrating strong demand for the program. The successful uptake of the program was enabled by the Council's efforts to promote the program through local channels and groups, using promotional materials developed by Lively and Humankind Enterprises. This promotional material was specifically designed to ensure that the technology help offer was presented as friendly, informal and welcoming, given that many older people find technology intimidating, and may not respond to programs that sound overly technical.
- \* **Program venue:** The St Andrews Community Centre was a good site for delivering the program; the spaces were welcoming, well-lit, and the range of available spaces meant that helpers and participants could split off into different areas to record stories in quiet and private environments. The co-location of the Centre with the Men's Shed next door also enabled the program to engage additional participants from the Men's Shed throughout the program, broadening the program's reach to people who might not otherwise have engaged with it.
- \* **Welcome afternoon tea:** A welcome afternoon tea for all young and older participants was held immediately following the youth training session. This welcoming event provided an informal opportunity for program participants to meet and get to know each other, and to provide information to the group about the program. Several participants used the session to ask questions about how the program would run, and the session built a friendly atmosphere and positive anticipation in the lead-up to the official start of the program.
- \* **Celebration event:** At the end of the program, a community celebration event was held to screen a compilation of the participant videos that had been recorded during the program, and for young and older participants to share reflections on their experience. It also provided an opportunity for participants to reconnect after the end of the program. The event was well attended, including by local Councillors and other interested individuals from the local community.

- \* **Facilitation and supervision:** All sessions were supervised by a Council staff member, and occasionally Lively or Humankind Enterprises staff. The presence of a supervisor to provide oversight and support as required played a valuable role in ensuring the smooth delivery of program sessions.
- \* **Flexibility of the technology training:** The program was designed to be flexible to the varied needs and interests of older participants in regards to technology training and support. Rather than following a set course structure and 'lesson plans', older participants were able to bring along their own devices to the program and focus the time with their helper on their own individual questions and learning goals. Older participants appreciated this flexibility, as it ensured that the technology learning was directly relevant and applicable for them. Those who did not have access to their own device, or could not bring one to the sessions, were able to practice on a loan iPad. Having these loan iPads available played an important role in the program.
- \* **Community transport:** Free community transport to and from the venue was made available for participants who would not otherwise have been able to participate in the program due to a lack of mobility and available transport. This played an important role in supporting older participants from across the Shire to participate, ensuring that transport was not a barrier for potential participants.
- \* **Refreshments:** Providing tea, coffee and refreshments during the sessions created a welcoming space and helped to foster rapport between participants. Young participants could offer hot drinks (e.g. tea or coffee) to older participants at the start of their sessions, which some found to be a helpful way of breaking the ice before getting to know each other. Refreshments also helped to foster a casual and informal atmosphere that put participants at ease. This is particularly important given that many older people can feel anxiety about learning new technologies, and a relaxing environment can therefore help to reduce anxieties and maximise learning outcomes.

## Challenges

- \* **Internet access:** Access to the internet was sometimes limited and unreliable at St Andrews Community Centre. This meant that time during the sessions was often spent helping participants connect to alternate wifi networks or connections. Although this wasted some of the time that would otherwise have been available to participants during their sessions, the challenge was generally overcome by hot spotting participant mobiles and/or connecting to alternate networks.
- \* **Consistency of participants:** Not all older participants could come to the program each week, meaning that young participants were sometimes without a 'match' to work with during particular sessions. In these instances, young participants sometimes joined in with another pair, or interviewed and recorded each other's stories and reflections.
- \* **Device storage:** Given that the video files recorded with older participants were large in size, some young participants lacked adequate storage space on their phones to store the videos, and/or had trouble uploading the video footage to a program Dropbox folder. To overcome these challenges, young participants transferred videos between phones and onto a Council laptop so that they could be uploaded to Dropbox by the Council supervisor back at the office.

## Suggestions for future programs in Nillumbik community

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The feedback from the program suggests that there is significant demand in the local community for continued or replicated programs of this nature. In particular, many program participants were interested in ongoing technology help sessions to help them continue their learning and build further skills.

*"I believe that word of mouth from we participants will hopefully encourage others to take up similar opportunities"*

- Older participant

*"It was enjoyable and informative. Hope it happens again".*

- Older participant

It is understood that Nillumbik Shire Council aims to continue the delivery of technology help programs through the Be Connected funding program. It is highly recommended that the Council do use the Be Connected program to help meet the ongoing need for technology support in the community. Given the positive intergenerational outcomes of engaging young people as digital mentors in the Tech, Tea and Tales program, it would also be of particular benefit to engage more young people as volunteer mentors in the Be Connected program, to continue building the intergenerational connections and learning observed through the Tech, Tea and Tales program.

Given the size of the Nillumbik Shire community, there is also an opportunity to explore running the program in other Community Centres throughout the Shire. This may encourage the involvement of community members who were not able to attend St Andrews Community Centre due to distance and/or limited mobility.

It is worth noting that community members who are experiencing social isolation may stand to gain the very most from a program of this nature, however these individuals can, by nature, be difficult to find and engage in the program. It may be useful for the Council to work with other service providers and agencies, including home care providers, to identify and proactively connect with older community members who are isolated. Transport may need to be arranged for older people who do not have the capacity to make their own way to and from the program.

Finally, one participant noted during the program that it would be helpful for the Council to provide access to loan devices (such as iPads) for participants who do not have access to their own device but who would like to practice and learn more. The participant noted that this may encourage individuals to purchase their own devices by providing them with an opportunity to further explore whether the device would be of use and benefit to them. Given that effective technology learning requires frequent practice and repetition, access to loan devices would also help older people who do not have access to a device at home to concretise their learning and new technology skills through individual practice at home.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Young employee pre-program survey

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
I find it easy to put myself in somebody else's shoes					
I am good at predicting how someone will feel					
I am quick to spot when someone in a group is feeling awkward or uncomfortable					
Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking					
I find it hard to know what to do in a social situation					
I often find it hard to judge if something is rude or polite					
It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much					
Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don't always see why					

	← Never or almost never true				Always or almost always true →			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unsure
I am sensitive to what others are not saying								
I am aware of what others imply but do not say								
I understand how others feel								
I listen for more than just the spoken words								
I assure others that I will remember what they say								
I summarise points of agreements and disagreement when appropriate								
I keep track of points others make								
I assure others that I am listening by using verbal acknowledgements								
I assure others that I am receptive to their ideas								

I ask questions that show my understanding of others' positions								
I show others that I am listening by my body language (e.g. head nods, etc.)								

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## Appendix II: Young employee post-program survey

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
I find it easy to put myself in somebody else's shoes					
I am good at predicting how someone will feel					
I am quick to spot when someone in a group is feeling awkward or uncomfortable					
Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking					
I find it hard to know what to do in a social situation					
I often find it hard to judge if something is rude or polite					
It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much					
Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don't always see why					

	← Never or almost never true				Always or almost always true →			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unsure
I am sensitive to what others are not saying								
I am aware of what others imply but do not say								
I understand how others feel								
I listen for more than just the spoken words								
I assure others that I will remember what they say								
I summarise points of agreements and disagreement when appropriate								
I keep track of points others make								
I assure others that I am listening by using verbal acknowledgements								
I assure others that I am receptive to their ideas								
I ask questions that show my understanding of others' positions								
I show others that I am listening by my body language (e.g. head nods, etc.)								

As a result of my involvement with the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I feel that I am making a greater contribution to others in the community than I was before.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat
<input type="checkbox"/>	No – I already felt like I was making a contribution to the community
<input type="checkbox"/>	No – I do not feel like I have contributed to the community through my work in this program

As a result of my involvement with the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I feel more aware of my own skills and what I have to offer others.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat
<input type="checkbox"/>	No – I was already aware
<input type="checkbox"/>	No – my experience in the program has not made me more aware

Thinking about yourself now as compared to before your work as a Tech and Story Helper, how would you rate your skills and abilities in the following areas?

	A lot better	A bit better	The same	A bit worse	A lot worse
Initiating and maintaining a conversation with a stranger					
Making yourself understood					
Understanding and empathising with people who are different to you					
Exercising patience					
Providing clear instructions to others					
Managing your time					
Solving problems independently					
Taking initiative					
Coming up with creative responses to challenges					
Using technology					
Thinking on your feet					

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? As a result of working in the Tech, Tea and Tales program:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel that I have developed greater confidence in myself					
I feel that I have built greater self-esteem					
I am more aware of older community members and their experiences					
I am more respectful of older community members					
I am more likely to recognise ageism against older people when I see it					
I am more likely to challenge ageism against older people when I see it					

As a result of my involvement with the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I feel:

	Much more connected to the Nillumbik community
	A bit more connected to the Nillumbik community
	The same amount of connection to the Nillumbik community
	A bit less connected to the Nillumbik community
	Much less connected to the Nillumbik community

Prior to participating in the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I visited the St Andrews Community Centre:

	Regularly
	Occasionally
	Rarely
	Never

Prior to participating in the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I interacted with older people in the Nillumbik Shire Community (beyond my own family members):

	Regularly
	Occasionally
	Rarely
	Never

As part of this program, did you share any stories of your experiences during the time of the Black Saturday bush fires?

	Yes
	No

If yes, what difference has it made to you (if any) to be able to share those stories?

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## Appendix III: Young employee end of program interview questions

What has been the most significant change you've experienced as a result of participating in this program?

What's the biggest thing you've learnt during this program?

Can you share a story of one of your favourite moments during the program?

What was the most unexpected aspect of this experience for you?

What have you enjoyed most?

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## Appendix IV: Nillumbik Shire Council end of program interview questions

In which ways did the program meet your expectations? In which ways did it not meet your expectations?

What have been the most successful parts of the program in your mind? (think about this question in relation to you/council, the community, the YP, the OP, the way the program was run, the content of the program)

What have been the most challenging parts of the program in your mind? (think about this question in relation to you/council, the community, the YP, the OP, the way the program was run, the content of the program)

Can you share a story of one of your favourite moments during the program?

How could the program be improved in the future - the content, the way the program is run?

What other thoughts or reflections do you have?

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## Appendix V: Older participant post-program survey

As a result of the help I have received from my Tech and Story Helper, I:

	Yes	No	Somewhat	N/A
Feel more confident when using technology/my device				
Feel less anxious or fearful about technology/my device				
Have improved digital skills and understanding				
Am better able to figure things out and teach myself new things about technology/my device				
Feel more motivated to continue learning more				

As a result of the digital skills I have learned from my Tech and Story Helper during the program, I am now:

	Much more often	A bit more often	The same	A bit less often	Much less often	N/A
Using technology to pursue my interests (e.g. hobbies, reading articles of interest, etc.)						
Using technology to access entertainment (e.g. videos, music, news, podcasts, etc.)						
Using technology to find information and services						
Using technology to manage daily affairs (e.g. bill payments, correspondence, banking, etc.)						
Using technology to communicate with friends and family						
Using technology to communicate with wider community members (e.g. interest groups)						

As a result of my participation in the program, I feel:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Much more connected to others
<input type="checkbox"/>	A bit more connected to others
<input type="checkbox"/>	The same
<input type="checkbox"/>	A bit less connected to others
<input type="checkbox"/>	Much less connected to others

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Spending time with my Tech and Story Helper has been a reminder of the experience, skills and knowledge I have to offer					
I feel like my Tech and Story Helper has also learnt some things from me during our sessions					
In my dealings with the Tech, Tea and Tales program and my Tech and Story Helper, I have felt like a valued and respected member of my community					
Spending time with my Tech and Story Helper has increased my understanding of younger generations					
Spending time with my Tech and Story Helper has made me feel more positive about younger people in my community					
I have enjoyed spending time with my Tech and Story Helper					

Prior to participating in the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I visited the St Andrews Community Centre:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Regularly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rarely
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never



Prior to participating in the Tech, Tea and Tales program, I interacted with young people in the Nillumbik Shire Community (beyond my own family members):

	Regularly
	Occasionally
	Rarely
	Never

As part of this program, did you share any stories of your experiences during the time of the Black Saturday bush fires?

	Yes
	No

If yes, what difference has it made to you (if any) to be able to share those stories?

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with your overall experience in the Tech, Tea and Tales program?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Extremely dissatisfied						Extremely satisfied

Do you have any comments or feedback you would like to share about the program?

