

31 March 2021

## FREE COMMUNITY WI-FI PROJECT IN HEPBURN SHIRE

As part of the Victorian Government's Community Activation and Social Isolation (CASI) initiative, Council has been successful in receiving funding to extend the proposed Clunes and Creswick free community WI-FI project to Daylesford and Trentham.

The CASI Special Projects fund invited submissions for projects that deliver on the expected outcomes of the CASI initiative:

- Isolated and vulnerable people receive the support and resources they need to be healthy and well during COVID-19 response and recovery
- Isolated and vulnerable people have new social connections in their local communities.

In the 2016 Census, the number of dwellings who don't have internet is higher in Hepburn Shire than the State and National average. This means more people in Hepburn than average can't access the internet from their home. When we break this data down to SA1 levels based on the SEIFA index of disadvantage, our most disadvantaged SA1s are even less likely to be able to access internet at home. The most disadvantaged SA1 in the Hepburn Shire, according to SEIFA, has 41.1% of homes not connected to the internet – which is a high number. This means that while many of the community are on zoom and exploring other online options, like shopping and telehealth, our most vulnerable community members are unable do that, because they didn't have access to the internet.

The Hepburn Shire Free Community WI-FI project will provide Creswick, Clunes, Daylesford and Trentham main street areas with free 24/7 access to WI-FI. This resource aims to allow community members, who would otherwise not be able to access online services, to do so.

Council would like to acknowledge the funding support of Catherine King MP for assisting of funding for Clunes and Creswick and the Victorian State Government for Daylesford and Trentham for this project.

Residents will be able to access free community WI-FI from 30 June 2021.

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