

Grants now open to help seniors get surfing and texting

22 July 2009 Grants worth up to \$50,000 are now available from Telstra for community groups to teach seniors the benefits of using mobile phones and computers.

Eligible community organisations can apply for Telstra Connected Seniors® grants at www.telstraseniors.com.au until 27 August, 2009 (5pm AEST). Grant amounts range up to \$5,000 for local organisations and up to \$50,000 for state and territory organisations.

David Moffatt, Group Managing Director of Telstra Consumer is encouraging community organisations to apply now for a grant, saying the workshops are a great way to help seniors learn how to pursue new activities online, as well as a way for community groups to reinvigorate their membership.

"Learning to communicate with friends and family either online or by mobile phone is usually the first step for seniors," Mr Moffatt said.

"Once they've gained confidence in their ability to use new technology to text, email and send and receive photos via email there's a world of new activities to explore like researching family trees, re-uniting online with old friends and seeking travel and holiday information.

"Other skills enthusiastically embraced at Telstra Connected Seniors® workshops include banking and shopping online and learning to take photos on mobile phones."

For local organisations like clubs, neighbourhood and community centres, running a course can help strengthen their membership base and offer new ways to stay in touch with current members. Learning at their own pace alongside friends and neighbours, who are in the same boat when it comes to their understanding of technology, is also a good motivator for seniors to get involved.

VIEW Clubs of Australia has secured a further round of funding to conduct Telstra Connected Seniors® workshops around the country for both mature VIEW Club members, their spouses and other interested community members.

Spokesperson Robin Vargo said learning to use technology was invaluable in helping seniors reconnect with family members and to overcome social isolation.

"The response from members to the first round of funding was well beyond our expectations and our VIEW Club trainers are enjoying the experience as much as the participants," Ms Vargo said.

"Through technology training, seniors can learn to easily and regularly communicate with friends and family who have moved out of their local area or interstate.

"Some seniors may not be as mobile nowadays but they can overcome this by communicating online, striking up new hobbies via the web or by researching a range of topics of interest. Technology can also assist members to re-engage with their club via SMS, email or sharing information via online forums."

The grants are part of Telstra's \$3 million, three-year Telstra Connected Seniors® program which helps seniors make the most of new communications technology.

Not-for-profit community organisations with a primary member base of people age over 60 are eligible to apply now at www.telstraseniors.com.au

Organisations that have previously received grants and successfully completed their training can reapply for further Telstra Connected Seniors® funding in this round.