

Digital Sisters Program Snapshot

Whittlesea Community Connections



1. The Challenge

Without digital skills, women face significant challenges accessing services, communicating with schools, finding employment, and participating fully in their communities.

Research consistently shows that digital exclusion is deeply connected to settlement disadvantage.

For many migrant and refugee women, barriers include:

- Limited access to devices or affordable internet
- Low digital confidence and limited prior experience
- Language barriers across online systems
- Reliance on informal networks for information and support
- Fear of making mistakes online

These barriers do not exist in isolation, they compound isolation, limit independence, and restrict access to essential services and opportunities.

2. The Program

Digital Sisters responds to digital exclusion by creating culturally safe, community-led learning spaces where refugee and migrant women are supported not only to use technology, but to confidently participate and belong in an increasingly digital world.

The program helps women build digital skills, confidence, and independence through practical group sessions and one-on-one support. Women learn how to access services, communicate with schools, search for jobs, and safely navigate online systems.

Delivered by bicultural mentors and supported by volunteers, Digital Sisters provides trusted spaces where women can learn at their own pace. Through the grant period, we delivered 5 group programs, 6 volunteer-led learning sessions, and 77 one-on-one support sessions, helping women with tailored digital needs and practical everyday tasks.

Using an intergenerational approach, the program recognises that when mothers build digital confidence, the benefits flow to children, families, and the wider community.



Our Journey with Digital Sisters

Whittlesea Community Connections first became involved in the Digital Sisters program in August 2023 when it was delivered as a pilot project. This was followed by a small grant focused on the Digital Sisters AI Literacy Pilot Program.

What began as a small-scale initiative quickly became a core part of our digital inclusion work. Since then, through the Digital Sisters grant and the AI Literacy Pilot, we have supported:

✓ **80+**

women through foundational digital literacy learning

✓ **30+**

women through AI literacy sessions delivered in safe, supported environments

But the numbers only tell part of the story.

We have intentionally built a culturally safe, trust-based model of delivery by investing in community capacity:

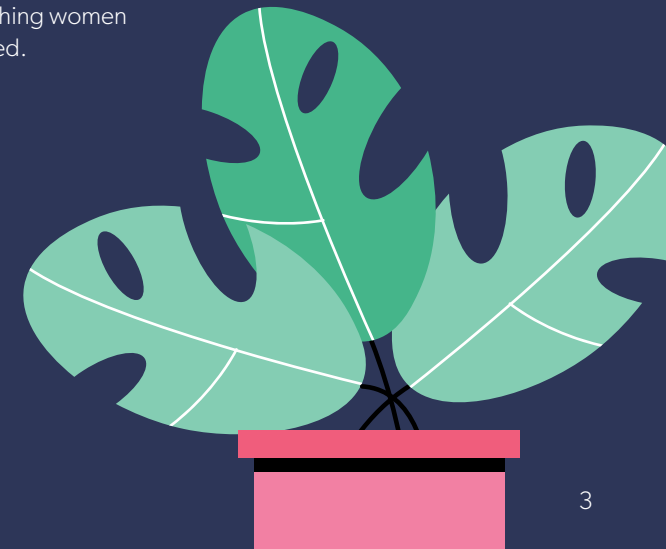
✓ **5 bicultural workers**

trained as Digital Mentors, ensuring support is delivered in language, culture, and trust

✓ **4 volunteers**

engaged in one-on-one support roles, assisting women with more complex or sensitive digital needs

This model has been essential in reaching women who would otherwise remain excluded.



Impact: What Has Changed

The impact of Digital Sisters goes far beyond learning how to use devices. For many women, it has meant a shift in identity from feeling excluded to feeling capable, connected, and independent.

For women

Women have moved from digital uncertainty to digital confidence. They are now:

- Communicating directly with schools and teachers
- Accessing health, housing, and government services independently
- Participating in online learning and training
- Applying for jobs and engaging in employment pathways
- Staying connected with family, friends, and community networks

Most importantly, women report feeling more confident, more independent, and more in control of their own lives.

For families and children

The current effects are powerful.

Children now see their mothers engaging confidently with technology, supporting school systems, and navigating online learning platforms. This strengthens:

- Family communication and connection
- Parental engagement in education
- Intergenerational learning and confidence

For many families, this program has changed the home environment making digital engagement a shared strength rather than a barrier.



"This program didn't just teach me skills. It gave me confidence."

Participant Voice

For bicultural workers and mentors

The program has created meaningful pathways into employment and skill development.

Bicultural workers have gained:

- Paid and structured local work experience
- Training in facilitation, mentoring, and digital support
- Increased confidence in working within Australian systems
- Clearer pathways into community services and employment

For many, this has been their first professional role in Australia a critical step toward long-term economic participation.

For volunteers

Volunteers have played a vital role in bridging gaps in support.

In return, they have gained:

- A strong sense of purpose and belonging
- Opportunities to share skills and lived experience
- Deeper connection with their local community
- Increased understanding of settlement and inclusion challenges

For the organisation and community sector

This program has strengthened our ability to work collaboratively across services and communities.

It has:

- Deepened partnerships with local organisations
- Expanded our reach to women who are often not engaged through mainstream services
- Strengthened trust within CALD communities
- Positioned us as a key partner in digital inclusion work
- Contributed to securing further funding from Good Things Foundation to expand cohorts and impact

Why This Matters

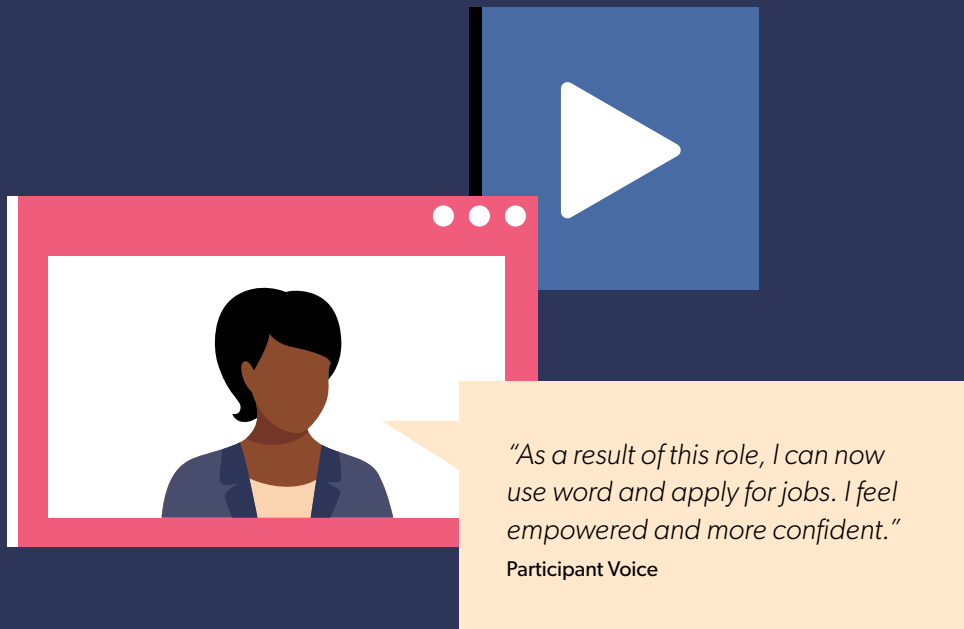
In today's world, digital access is no longer optional it's essential for daily life, connection, safety, and opportunity.

Without digital skills, women are excluded from:

- Services
- Education
- Employment
- Community participation

With digital skills, women gain not just access but independence, and dignity.

The Digital Sisters program demonstrates that when learning is culturally safe, community-led, and trust-based, it creates lasting change that extends far beyond the limits.



Conclusion

The Digital Sisters program is more than a digital literacy initiative.

It is a program that builds confidence, connection, and opportunity and in doing so, it strengthens families, communities, and futures.

At Whittlesea Community Connections, we are proud to be part of a program that is not only closing the digital divide, but also opening doors to participation, belonging, and empowerment.





Whittlesea
Community
Connections
Making a positive difference everyday

Contact Us

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