

## **Media release**

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### **Seniors isolated by digital divide, says report**

The internet would enrich the lives of older Australians but many of them think that using it is all too hard, the latest report released by the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre has found.

There was increasing awareness that the internet could provide the convenience of email, health advice, online shopping, bill-paying, banking and keeping in touch with family, friends, news and events in their community.

But the research also showed many were deterred by concerns such as the cost of buying a computer and Internet or broadband connection, a lack of knowledge and skills, confusion about technology, worries about computer security and access to computers – particularly in regional areas.

The study “*Older Australians and the Internet: Bridging the Digital Divide*” was undertaken by Queensland University of Technology researcher Dr Sandra Haukka for National Seniors.

“Older people with low internet skills are unable to conduct business or access important services over the web,” said Peter Matwijiw, general manager of policy and research at National Seniors.

“They can be isolated from their community and family at a time in their lives when feeling connected is very important,” Matwijiw said.

“In short, they are often on the wrong side of ‘the digital divide’.”

Bridging that divide was an important national challenge, given the rapidly ageing population, rising health care costs and later retirement ages, the report said.

It also called for urgent action to tailor current online technologies to help break down barriers and assist older Australians gain the skills and confidence they need to use the internet.

**Peter Matwijiw is available for interview on 0488 097 318.**

*With a quarter of a million members Australia-wide, National Seniors is the consumer lobby for the over-50s. It is the fourth largest organisation of its type in the world.*

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