

Seniors and technology

TRANSCRIPT

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Nan Bosler - President, Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association

HANK JONGEN: Hi I'm Hank Jongen. And joining me today is Nan Bosler. Nan is the President of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA). Welcome Nan.

NAN BOSLER: Delighted to be here.

HANK JONGEN: Now how about we start with you just telling us a little bit about yourself, your views and most importantly, the importance of seniors understanding the use of technology.

NAN BOSLER: Well technology is a really important part of my life. And I think learning is a lifelong opportunity, and it's sad when seniors don't embrace technology, because they're really missing out.

And ASCCA, and it's much easier to say just ASCCA than a full name, ASCCA is determined that we are going to help seniors master simple computer skills and enjoy exploring the satisfaction and benefits of using technology.

HANK JONGEN: It's as simple as simple as that?

NAN BOSLER: Simple as that.

HANK JONGEN: But of course some people would feel quite intimidated about embracing technology for the first time.

NAN BOSLER: That's true. That's quite true because seniors are a little scared to try something new. But you know we can do it. It's not as hard as we think and if a senior who is motivated to use technology, they're going to succeed. And it's even easier if they select their peers to give them a helping hand.

HANK JONGEN: I can see you're passionate about it and I guess really that passion has converted itself, if you like, into a number of lifetime service awards.

For example I know you've won the lifetime service award for the 2017 not-for-profit Technology Awards. Congratulations on that. Tell me about your work and the ASCCA.

NAN BOSLER: Well ASCCA is determined that we're going to help seniors.

ASCCA is an organization that's run by seniors for seniors, and through our clubs - and we have a network of clubs right across Australia - through our clubs, we help seniors to master even simple skills and it's important.

The internet is too good to miss! And we're determined that seniors will be confident and aware users of the internet. We can do so much if you can use the internet; you can keep in touch with family and friends, you can book your overseas travel, you can do a course at university, you can look up old school friends. Hank, it's marvellous. It's too good to miss!

HANK JONGEN: And tell me, what other help is available for seniors who want to learn to use technology? You've reflected on the things that you can do, but what about the direct assistance that you provide for users of technology?

NAN BOSLER: Well we have our clubs right across Australia and we're helping wherever we can to make sure that seniors are using technology.

But it's really interesting and very exciting that there's actually a Digital Literacy for older Australians program that's going to be launched by the Government in October 2017. Now that's exciting.

The new program is really taking the place of the Broadband for Seniors program, which ASCCA was involved with since 2008, and through that program already something like half a million seniors have been taught how to access the internet.

So this new Digital Literacy Program is going to be really fantastic. It's probably going to adopt a wider family and community based process. There's a new web site... oh it's exciting!

HANK JONGEN: Nan you paint a really exciting picture, but of course there are some traps for new players, aren't there? Particularly in relation to privacy. Do you just want to reflect a bit on what people can do to protect their privacy?

NAN BOSLER: That's an important issue and seniors are really quite concerned about privacy issues.

They need to always be very careful about what they put online. If they are on Facebook, they need to be careful what they're actually telling other people.

I mean I am horrified if I see a friend say "Oh I'm going away for three weeks holidays. Oh it's going to be wonderful!" and you think, right. Empty house. Three weeks. Not good. OK.

We've also got to be very careful when we get people asking to be a friend on one of our pages. Check it out. If you don't know that person, don't make them a friend.

And you've really got to make sure you never put anything that's really private online. Don't give your bank details, don't give your password. It's common sense that you wouldn't be telling someone on the bus "Oh yes my password is such-and-such". Anyone can hear it. They can use it. So they really must be careful.

ASCCA is determined that seniors are going to be aware but confident users of the internet, and so they must keep safe.

And grandparents have a role to play with the younger members of their family because sometimes, if mom says "You can't do that", Dad's likely to say "Well, internet's off". But as a grandparent, you can say "Honey, just be a little bit careful about what you're putting up online. It's a good idea to just watch what you do". Simple, easy and you pay your work as a Grandmum.

HANK JONGEN: And of course look for Centrelink and Department of Human Services customers, those same common sense rules apply.

From our perspective, we make it really important for people to understand that we would not include private information in either an email or a text.

We never send emails with links. If you receive an email with a link, which is the text highlighted in blue for you to click to another location, you know that it's a scam.

From our point of view as well, we would never get you to download files from the internet or open documents attached to an email.

And of course as you said, we would never ask for passwords or pin numbers.

And there's another interesting thing too, where some people have received bogus emails asking them to pay a fee, allegedly to receive arrears of Centrelink payments. We would never do that and we would never ask you to buy gift cards in order to receive a payment from us as well.

NAN BOSLER: Oh that's so important for seniors to know. But how do people do business with your department?

HANK JONGEN: Well the best starting point is myGov, which is a simple and secure way for you to open an account in order to access a whole range of services that we can provide online.

Creating a myGov account is a straightforward and simple process and you then link it to either Centrelink, Medicare and of course other agencies like the tax office, all of which enables you to do business online.

Our main accounts are Centrelink and Medicare, and that's the best way to do business with us.

And if you use myGov, you can claim payments online, you can receive updates on your the rates of payment, you can provide us with information, changes of circumstances, such as changes of income for example.

And best yet, you can open an Express Plus app account on your mobile phone or smartphone. And that means you can do business with us in the palm of your hand! Which is the simplest and most straight forward way of avoiding queues and having to call us.

NAN BOSLER: Seniors always like options and it seems you've got a few options there for us to use.

HANK JONGEN: Oh that's right. And look with the smartphone apps, of course, you can download them at any time of the day and you can interact with us 24/7. You don't have to wait for opening business times in order to do business with us.

And we have apps, as I've said before for Centrelink, Medicare, but also Child Support, which although it's less relevant for seniors, if you're a Grandmum, tell your children about it so that they can start accessing those services.

NAN BOSLER: We like to look as if we're clever and tell people things.

HANK JONGEN: Absolutely.

NAN BOSLER: A lot of seniors I speak to find the claim forms are a bit of a challenge. Now what are you doing to help those people to make their claims?

HANK JONGEN: Well the good news is we've just introduced online claim forms for Age Pension, which makes the whole process a lot simpler. Because as you answer questions and you eliminate certain areas, for example you may not have assets, that eliminates a whole series of questions that you no longer have to answer.

So and in addition to that we can do staff assisted claiming. So if you're not entirely comfortable with lodging a claim online, you can come into one of our offices, or do it over the phone, and we'll help you step through the various processes.

But the great thing about an online claim, is that something like a 30 page form, depending on your situation, can be reduced down to a much smaller number of questions, which are focused on the information we need in relation to you.

Now of course paper forms are still available if that's what you prefer to do. But of course, we encourage people to use the online options that you can.

And the great thing about an online claim as well, is that if you've got an online account or you open an online account, you can then follow the progress of your claim, which means you have valuable information, but guess what? For us, it means you don't have to keep ringing us to find out what's happening with your claim.

NAN BOSLER: Hank, you know the people of the community see you as the ambassador for older Australians.

How do we keep in touch, how do we keep up with what you and your department are doing?

HANK JONGEN: Ok, look the most important thing is to follow us on Facebook.

We have a page called Seniors Update and it's a fantastic new area where you can receive up to date information. But also, we can answer general enquiries. So you can post your general enquiries, obviously if it's more personal, we wouldn't encourage you to use Facebook because of privacy reasons, but you can put up general enquiries and we can provide you with answers.

In addition to that, of course, I have an official Facebook page which serves a similar function; where again, we try and impart as much information as we can. So you can follow me or Seniors Update, or both, on both Facebook and Twitter, and we encourage you to do that.

But of course, in addition to that, as many people would be aware, I also do a lot of work on particularly talkback radio. So it's a good idea to listen out, to hear when I'm coming on air, because usually it's a full

half hour segment where I take a whole string of questions, and again it's an opportunity to impart good, reliable, general information. So you know, use the tools that suit you, is my advice.

NAN BOSLER: I like the idea of being able to ask questions and then having them answered, because the question that one person might ask is likely to be something that is of interest, or concern, to a lot of other people.

HANK JONGEN: Absolutely and what we find is, someone will post a question and not only will we answer that, and that answers for a whole range of other people, but as you know with Facebook you can then share it, and you know it extends even further and further in terms of the reach.

And look there's a lot of things that are that are of interest to people. For example, you know the recent rules in relation to retirement age have just started to kick in. So of course we're putting a lot of effort into ensuring that we explain those changes.

NAN BOSLER: That all sounds great. I'm going to encourage everybody to have a look at those sites, and they'd better click that 'like' button, hadn't they?

HANK JONGEN: That's right. And look with you backing us, Nan, the sky's the limit.

But Nan, look I really want to thank you for your time today and I hope this isn't the last opportunity we have to have a bit of a chat with you, and I look forward to doing something like this again in the future.

NAN BOSLER: And I will too.

HANK JONGEN: If you enjoyed this video and would like to see more, then like Seniors Update, and my official account, and follow us to get regular updates.

Nan and I would love to answer any questions you have about technology and engaging with the department online. Just leave us a comment below with your questions, suggestions and feedback.

Remember it's important to let us know if your circumstances change. Life can get busy, but it's never too late to update your details with us.

I'm Hank Jongen, goodbye for now.