

# Tech reality offers start-up options

**A program designed to build digital and business skills and encourage start-up entrepreneurship in the region has been a revelation for young people and adults alike.**

Peter Sacco, Program Manager at the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE) in Beechworth, said people of all ages will take part in the 12 month Think-Start-Grow program in the Towong Shire. The Digital Taster sessions held in December 2018 had school students discovering new uses for technology.

"We were pleased that ACRE could offer the Digital Taster workshops to schools across the Towong Shire as a part of their Think-Start-Grow program. It was a great opportunity to demonstrate virtual reality and augmented reality to students who were captivated; many of them not aware of the possibilities these technologies offer," Mr Sacco said.

Tallangatta Secondary College student, Teagan Wood said she was surprised by the interactive abilities of the tools.

"I didn't really know most of the tools existed or that you can access them in a place like this where we don't really get much digital stuff," Teagan said.

The virtual and augmented reality experience arrived in Tallangatta, Corryong and Mitta Mitta in the form of the ThinkDigital Coach. The coach is a high-tech 14 metre classroom on wheels that travels throughout Australia providing digital education and experiences.

ThinkDigital Coach founder, Tim Gentle is on a mission is to help bridge the digital divide



between the city and country. Mr Gentle demonstrated the use of immersive technologies in agriculture. One example educates people about where their food comes from and aims to inspire them to consider agriculture as a career pathway.

"This broadens people's understanding of how technology can be used in a start-up context and how it can be used to put ideas into action," Mr Sacco said.

"ACRE delivered a series of Digital Taster workshops and a Digital Crusaders program to young people from Beechworth late last year with ThinkDigital. It really helps them understand how technology can support a business idea and enable someone to continue living in this region while developing that business.

"It also shows people what the future landscape of employment looks like. That's as important to young people as it is for others in the community," he said.

Think-Start-Grow includes workshops to show potential entrepreneurs the basic online business tools such as social media and e-commerce platforms. Participants will also be involved in incubator events including a pitch-fest in 2019. Three winners will be selected for intensive mentoring over a 6 month period with local organisations and leaders in finance, business planning and marketing.

To ensure accessibility of the project to community members, each phase of the project, including Digital Taster sessions, will be offered in Corryong, Mitta Mitta and Tallangatta.

#### **acre.org.au**

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Think-Start-Grow is an initiative of ACRE and the Towong Shire Council, supported with funding from LaunchVic.