

> PC Update

December 2021

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Publishing Information



The newsletter of

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Responsibility for content in this newsletter lies with individually named authors

Please remember to always bring your membership card to meetings

SIG Listings and up to date calendar are available on our homepage

From The Editor December 2021

Hugh Macdonald

Hello and welcome to the final edition of PC Update for 2021!

And what another strange year it was. It started with some promise but ended up being another trying one. Hopefully along the way, whatever the situation has been, PC Update has kept you informed and entertained.

This month we feature some reading to help you get through the Summer:

There's a guide on installing Linux, if you're a Windows user and have ever wondered about giving it a go.

There are some potential solutions to common PC problems.

There's a look back at the ways in which big tech companies have fallen afoul of governments in 2021

There's also an analysis of fitness trackers which suggests they may be more useful than they seem to be,

There's a behind the scenes look at how PC Update is published.

There's also some of the usual items - Interesting Internet Finds and Yammer Highlights.

Before I close for 2021 I'd like to thank all my fellow members who have played a role throughout 2021 in bringing PC Update together. In no particular order there's been Harry Lewis, Tim McQueen, Paul Woolard, Roger Brown, Dennis Parsons, Malcolm Miles, Kevin Martin, George Wright and David Stonier-Gibson.

PC Update will return in February 2022. Take care until then.

Monthly Meeting December 2021

The November 2021 Monthly Meeting was held online on Wednesday 1st December 2021, with about 70 members in attendance via Zoom and a few in attendance at Moorabbin. This was the program for the evening:

Guests: Dr Michael Brand

Topic: Facebook (Meta) and Election Influence: A Data Story

Dr Michael Brand is the Head and Founder of Otzma Analytics, a Data Science consultancy dedicated to maximising clients' value from data by providing analytics upskilling, project review and executive mentoring. Before founding Otzma in 2018, Dr Brand served as Chief Data Scientist at Telstra, as Senior Principal Data Scientist at Pivotal, as Chief Scientist at Verint Systems, and as CTO Group Algorithm Leader at PrimeSense (where he worked on developing the Xbox Kinect). Dr Brand also served as Director of the Monash Centre for Data Science in his role as Associate Professor for Data Science and AI at Monash University, where he remains an adjunct. Dr Brand holds a PhD in IT from Monash University, an MSc in Applied Mathematics from the Weizmann Institute of Science, and a BSc in Engineering from Tel-Aviv University. He has made industry-defining contributions that have earned him 18 patents (more pending), garnered many prestigious industry and academic awards, and power flagship products for the companies he worked with.

Meeting Agenda

Meeting begins at 7pm. MC is Peter Bacon.

Keynote Presentation: Michael Brand

Interval: Music

Interval: How To Have A Hybrid Meeting That Works for Everyone - Kirsten Greed

President's Report: David Stonier-Gibson

iHelp Online with Harry Lewis. Please submit questions to ihelp-questions@melbpc.org.au before the segment.

Meeting concludes at 9pm. Informal iHelp Online will continue after the meeting. For those at Moorabbin the WAFFLE SIG will follow the meeting.

If you missed out the first time and would like to view any of these presentations, you can do so at <http://services.melbpc.org.au/videos/>

The username is videos and the password is drum286.

Getting To Know The Committee for 2021/22

At the November 2021 annual general meeting of Melbourne PC User Group the committee of management was up for reelection. Due to the fact that only existing committee members nominated for election, the existing committee was returned unopposed. As PC Update editor, I posed them some questions to get to know them better as people, as well as what they see as the most important thing they want to achieve for Melbourne PC User Group in the coming year. I received responses from David Stonier-Gibson, Harry Lewis and Stewart Grunkelee.

David Stonier-Gibson

If you could invite any influential person from the technology industry to dinner, who would it be and why?

Elon Musk. He has achieved more than anyone else in the tech space.

If you were sent away to a remote desert island and could only take one piece of technology with you, what would it be and why?

A Kindle loaded up with books and a solar charger.

What's the more significant invention - USB or WiFi?

WiFi. It can do most of what USB can.

What is your favourite book?

Time enough for Love (Robert Heinlein). Challenges all our assumptions about just about everything.

What is your favourite TV show or movie?

I dream of Jeanie.

If you could change just one thing about MelbPC this committee term, what would it be?

Make Moorabbin and what we offer into a new member magnet.

Harry Lewis

If you could invite any influential person from the technology industry to dinner, who would it be and why?

Douglas Engelbart. Any of the pioneers who imagined what is now the most familiar interface to computing devices. How did they conjure up something so different from what was around before and at the time?

If you were sent away to a remote desert island and could only take one piece of technology with you, what would it be and why?

A box of matches. (Once I got the fire started I should be able to keep it going, but I never had much luck rubbing two sticks together.)

What's the more significant invention - USB or WiFi?

A loaded question! two different generations of connectivity and standards. USB because it got there first.

What is your favourite book?

Whatever I happen to be reading at the time, if I have the time. 'Stalin's Wine Cellar' by John Baker and Nick Place, a fascinating insight into the strange world of expensive and historic wine collections.

What is your favourite TV show or movie?

Hard Quiz

If you could change just one thing about MelbPC this committee term, what would it be?

Recruiting more volunteers to the iHelp team.

Stewart Gruneklee

If you could invite any influential person from the technology industry to dinner, who would it be and why?

Rob McGinnis, the founder of Prometheus Fuels. His company is an American energy 'startup' developing tools to filter atmospheric CO2 using water, electricity, and nanotube membranes to produce commercially viable fuels. If this enterprise is economically successful, it will greatly assist in replacing the current usage of fossil fuels and dramatically change the way in which the world's nations approach the climate change challenge. He would be an interesting guest who could explain the details of how his process works.

If you were sent away to a remote desert island and could only take one piece of technology with you, what would it be and why?

A membrane pump style water purifier. Without clean water one cannot survive for long on a desert island.

What's the more significant invention - USB or WiFi?

WiFi. This invention frees us from cables, clutter and mostly, just works magnificently.

What is your favourite book?

The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndham. I first read this book in my teens and it has all the ingredients of a classic Sci-Fi novel. It is easy to read, engaging, exciting, imaginative and thoroughly plausible.

What is your favourite TV show or movie?

Walt Disney's Pinocchio (movie). A moral tale well told.

If you could change just one thing about MelbPC this committee term, what would it be?

Promote and engage in computer literacy training for the general public using Melb PC volunteer members as mentors. The Good Things Foundation oversees the disbursement of Federal Government grants to organisations that engage in the Be Connected program. Melb PC is a Be Connected Network member and as soon as all Covid restrictions are lifted and we can gain unfettered access to the

Moorabbin building in 2022, I plan to commence one day per week open to the public (and members) to attend and learn how to use their smart phones, computers and other devices.

How To Install Linux

Hugh Macdonald

Every few months in PC Update, reviews of different Linux distributions are featured, and other aspects of the operating system are discussed as well. So you might have found yourself interested in trying it out but been unsure of how to proceed. This interest in trying out Linux might have increased since the release in recent months of Windows 11, and the fact it will drop support for still relatively new hardware. So here is a Windows user's guide to switching to Linux. It should provide you with the major steps involved in getting your computer prepared for Linux and getting the operating system installed. As you ponder what to do over January, this might be something you want to have a go at.

Step One: Pick a Distribution

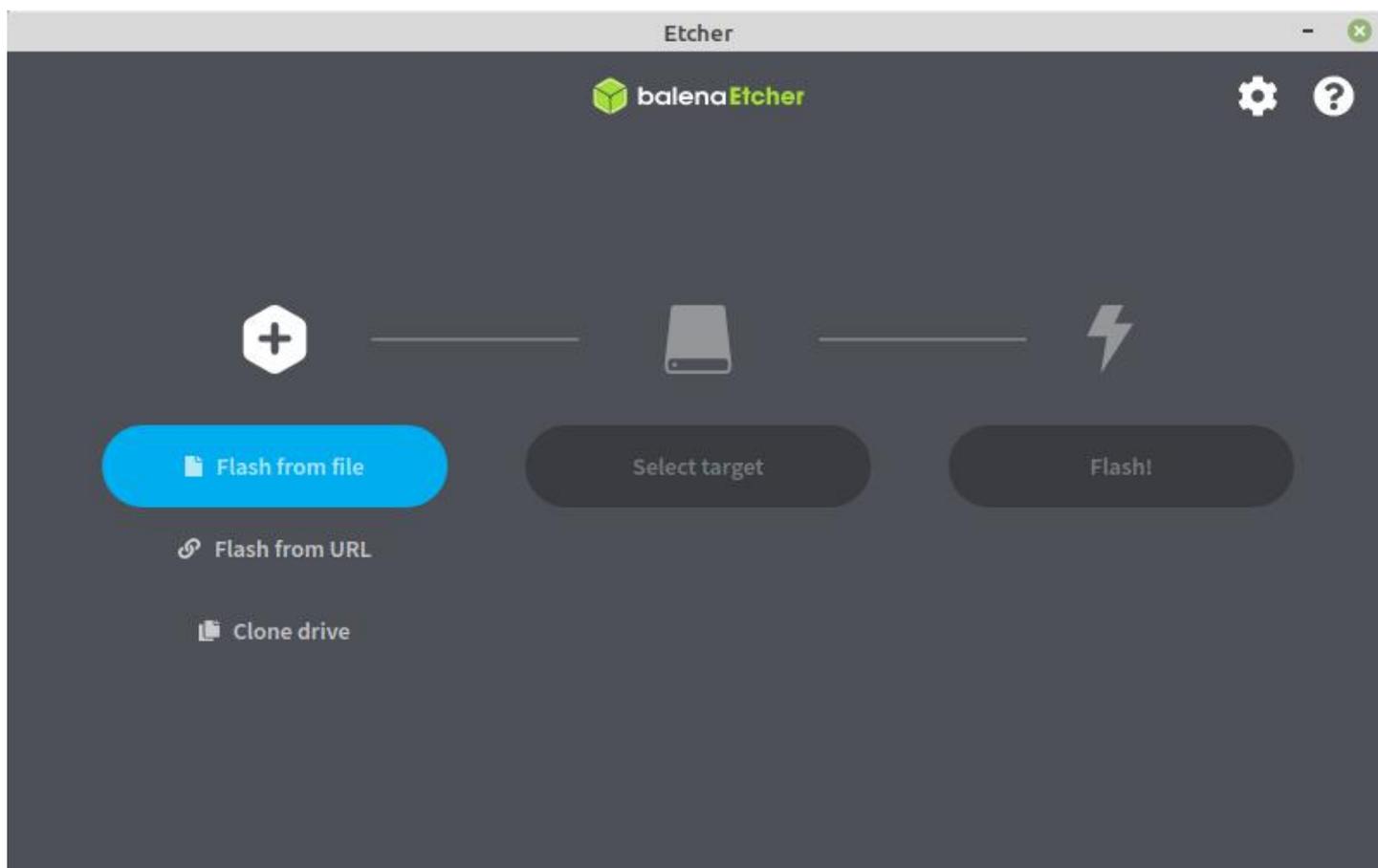
One of the daunting aspects of installing Linux for Windows users, is that there isn't just a handful of editions to choose from for installation as there is with Windows, but hundreds of distributions. So the best way to make sense of what all these distributions are and which one is the most appropriate for you is by heading to the Distrowatch website. Distrowatch provides overviews and reviews of every Linux distribution in existence and gives you an idea of which ones are the most popular with other users through their ranking system. Picking one of the most popular distributions is a safe way to go because there will be plenty of support online available from other users if you have any trouble. The best distribution for new users coming from Windows is Linux Mint - it uses an interface that is very similar to Windows 7 and has been designed to be easy to install and easy to use.

Step Two: Download Your Distribution

Once you have chosen the distribution you want to try (and as I will explain below, trying a distribution doesn't lock you into that distribution) you need to go to its website and download its installation ISO file. The ISO file is a disk image that can be burned to either a DVD or a USB stick. Generally, it will be between 1-2 gigabytes in size, so depending on the speed of your Internet connection, it could take around 20 to 40 minutes to download.

Step Three: Prepare Your Installation Media

Once you have the installation ISO file, you need to transfer it to either a DVD or USB stick so that your computer can boot from it. Unless you have a very old computer that won't boot from USB stick, then USB stick is the recommended way to go here as it is much faster to boot from and install from. To prepare a USB stick, you need to install a special utility. The one that is easiest to use for the task of preparing a Linux USB installer is Balena Etcher.



Once you have Etcher downloaded and open, you are presented with the interface pictured above. To make your Linux USB installer you simply press 'Flash from file' and choose the ISO file you've downloaded. Then you press 'Select target' and choose the USB drive you want to use (which will be erased and overwritten) and then 'Flash!' to start the writing process. The whole procedure should take less than ten minutes and then you'll have your Linux USB installer ready to use.

Step Four: Prepare Your Computer

If you're trying Linux for the first time, then I'd recommend you install it on a secondary or old computer that isn't your 'daily driver' so you can ease yourself into using it. This will be less stressful than migrating straight from your main Windows PC and having to get up to speed on everything Linux just to get your daily computing tasks done.

But if you are migrating directly from Windows then there are two ways to go about it. The first is to dual boot Linux side by side with Windows. This involves freeing up space on your Windows drive and then making a new partition that you can install Linux on. If you are looking to do this, then a quick Google will give you the steps that are involved. Alternatively, you can install a new additional solid-state drive or hard drive in your PC and install Linux on that.

The second way to migrate directly from Windows is to back up your Users directory (which is found in C:\Users\

Step Five: Boot from your Linux installer USB

Now that you've done all of the above, you're ready to shut down Windows and boot into Linux from your Linux installer USB. To do this firstly ensure it's inserted in one of the USB ports on your computer.

Secondly when you restart your computer, you may need to go into BIOS settings and alter a few things. One thing you may need to do is to find the option for Secure Boot and turn this off, as many Linux distributions do not support this. The second you might need to do is alter the order your devices boot in and put USB as the first device to try. This will ensure that your Linux installer USB will boot.

After this you can restart again and let your USB installer boot. It should take you into what's known as a live installation of your chosen Linux installation. Once you get here, you have a fully working version of Linux to play with. You can connect to your WiFi network and then use the included web browser (usually Firefox) to go online. There will also often be an included version of LibreOffice and other tools and utilities that you can try out.

If you like what you see and want to make Linux a permanent feature on your computer, then there will be a link on the desktop named 'Install <name of Linux distribution>' that you can click to start the installation process. If you don't like what you see, then you can either go back to step two and choose a different Linux distribution or you can abandon the exercise and go back to Windows.

Step Six: Install Linux

Installing Linux isn't usually much harder than installing Windows from scratch, so if you've ever done that, you should feel comfortable undertaking this process. You need to pick your language and currency format, your keyboard (it's normally US if your laptop was purchased in Australia), set your time zone, choose where to install Linux (whether you are erasing what's on the drive or installing in a partition beside what is already there) and then provide personal details to setup a user account and password. After you have been through all these steps, then you just need to wait while everything is copied and setup for you. The process normally doesn't take much more than ten minutes. Once everything is finished you will be prompted to restart (and prompted to remove the Linux installer USB).

Step Seven: Use Linux

If all went well in the previous step, you should now be rebooted into your Linux distribution. You'll simply need to login with the password that you set to start using everything.

If you setup Linux to dual boot with Windows, then when you first boot up your computer you will see a menu (usually known as GRUB) where you can choose between Linux and Windows before either one boots.

That's it. Have fun and if you do follow this guide to install Linux, feel free to drop me an email to let me know how you went. And if you need more specific help with any part of the process then the Linux Chat group on Yammer is the first place you should head.

Most Common Issues that Need Repair from a PC or Mac Repair Shop Perspective

Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PCUG

This month I am updating the presentation highlights from the session I gave at the APCUG virtual Technology Conference held back in 2019. I spoke on "Most Common Issues that Need Repair from a PC/Mac Repair Shop Perspective." Here are some of the highlights:

Failing or Failed Hard Disc Drives/HDD

Symptoms

- Poor performance
- Boot failure message
- Hard drive failure prediction message issued by Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology (SMART)

Solution

- Replace HDD with HDD (I no longer recommend doing this; you will be much better off with an SSD in almost every case)
- Replace HDD with Solid State Disk (SSD) If old HDD is still bootable, clone to a new drive
- If the old HDD is not bootable but is still readable, copy personal files off for later transfer to the new drive

Web Scammer Messages

Symptoms

- Locked out from PC with message panel displayed with a number to call
- Phone calls claiming to be Microsoft, Dell, etc.
- Web page that states you are infected and must call

Solution

- System Restore to last system checkpoint
- Clean/reset browser start pages and/or search engine
- Install Malwarebytes and perform a scan to remove any nasty programs

Poor Performance

Symptoms

- Slower boot times than normal
- Mouse/keyboard slow to respond
- Browsers/apps slow to load/respond

Solution

- Check for hard drive errors, and excessive usage in Task Manager - many hard drives with capacities of greater than 500GB are failing much sooner in my experience
- Check for malware/spyware - run Malwarebytes

- Check for obvious 'junk' programs in Programs & Features, especially programs that claim to maintain drivers
- Check for missing Windows updates
- Check Event Viewer logs for error messages

Lockout/Loops After Updates

Symptoms

- Spinning circle with black screen
- Loop constantly restarting
- A message with automatic repair failure/attempts

Solution

- Try using System Restore in Advanced tools
- Sometimes just letting it run 15-30 minutes fixes it

If these do not work, back up personal files and try a reset of the OS. Sometimes, the HDD must be wiped and reloaded if Windows cannot be booted after all recovery actions fail.

Reproduced from the June 2021 issue of The SCPCUG Journal.

How 2021 was the year governments really started to wise up against big tech

David Tuffley, *Griffith University*

After all the bad press tech companies have received, would anyone still be surprised to learn the outwardly smiling face of social media conceals a sophisticated data-collection industry?

This year's headlines delivered news of an array of concerning data and privacy violations from the world's biggest tech players. But interestingly, it also seemed to be the year governments around the world addressed the problem head on.

Google in trouble with the ACCC

In April, Australia's consumer watchdog, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, took Google to Federal court, citing Australian Consumer Law relating to consumer privacy.

It was alleged Google did not clearly identify how it collected and used users' location data collected through Android devices in 2017 and 2018. Google was accused of leading users to mistakenly believe their personal location data was not being collected, when it actually is.

The Court found Google's conduct was liable to misleading the public. Here's how.

A tale of two settings

There are two settings on Android devices that govern how data is collected: location history and web and app activity.

Stepping through the setup screens, the user is shown their location history as being switched off by default. But it's not made clear the web and app activity setting (located elsewhere) is *on* by default, and could also be used to collect location data - even if location history is switched off.

So the user might believe location tracking is switched off, but in reality tracking may still be performed because of the default web and app activity setting (which they might not know about).

Android 12 (released in October) now has a new privacy dashboard that goes some way towards remedying the permissions transparency issue. It shows the user which apps have accessed location services, and allows them to deny further access.

However, the web and app activity setting is still located elsewhere and not easily found. It is still switched on, by default, and able to track users' movements.

To switch this setting off, follow the instructions [here](#). But be aware that once you do this Google Maps might not work as well for you, and ads will become less relevant, along with search recommendations.

In separate proceedings in July, Google was once again sued by the ACCC for allegedly not disclosing it receives sensitive information about users from third-party websites and apps. Google was accused of using this information commercially without making the process clear to users.

The company was also hit with yet another major antitrust lawsuit, in which its influence over app developers was called into question.

Specifically, the multi-state lawsuit accused Google of abusing its market power to stifle competition and force users and developers to engage with Google's own high-fee payment processing system.

This was one in a number of US state and federal antitrust cases against the company, with the first one brought forward in October last year.

'Astronomical profits before people'

Meanwhile, Meta Platforms (or Facebook) is still reeling from Francis Haugen's damning testimony to the US Congress in October.

A former manager at Facebook, Haugen accused Facebook of a catalogue of antisocial behaviour, in which it knowingly allowed the amplification of hate speech, propagation of misinformation and instigation of political unrest on the platform.

Haugen claimed employees had expressed concerns internally, but these were disregarded, or at least were not enough to change the situation. She is due to give a follow-up testimony in December.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg refuted the allegations, saying they are "just not true". He wrote in a blog post:

The argument that we deliberately push content that makes people angry for profit is deeply illogical. We make money from ads, and advertisers consistently tell us they don't want their ads next to harmful or angry content.

More recently, the Washington Post reported on another anonymous whistleblower and former Facebook employee, who came out with a sworn affidavit saying Facebook puts profits ahead of stopping hate speech, misinformation and other threats to the public interest.

TikTok and children's data

In April, the former children's commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, launched a legal action concerning the way video-sharing app TikTok collects and uses the data of children using the app.

The lawsuit alleges TikTok (which is now said to have more than one billion users) collects sensitive personal information including children's phone numbers, where they live, and unspecified "biometric data" without sufficient transparency, and without asking consent as required by UK law.

TikTok's policies simply state it will collect information "you share with us from third-party social network providers, and technical and behavioural information about your use of the platform". But this does not sufficiently explain the nature and extent of the data collection.

The lawsuit also claims there's no transparency regarding how users' personal information is used. Longfield described TikTok as "a data collection service that is thinly veiled as a social network".

TikTok responded by saying user privacy and safety were its top priorities, and it has "robust policies, processes and technologies in place to help protect all users".

There's also the larger debate on whether TikTok - owned by Beijing-based company ByteDance - may be using user data for censorship, spreading propaganda among users, or to spy on users by feeding data back to the Chinese government (which is a ByteDance shareholder).

The essence of the problem

Currently, the fact people *could* read a terms and conditions document before clicking “agree” apparently amounts to informed consent, in the legal sense. The result is most users consent to their data being collected and used in numerous ways, but are none the wiser of the specifics.

Regulators must oblige platforms to be upfront and transparent about how user data is collected, used, and whom it is forwarded to (and for what purpose).

This could be achieved quite easily by including this information in plain language on the very same terms and conditions page. But as it stands it’s too easy for platforms to hide behind loose definitions of informed consent.

Although if the events of the past year are anything to go by, this may be starting to change.

David Tuffley, Senior Lecturer in Applied Ethics & CyberSecurity, *Griffith University*

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Why wearable fitness trackers aren't as useless as some make them out to be

Ben Singh, *University of South Australia* and Carol Maher, *University of South Australia*

Wearable fitness trackers will be on many Christmas shopping lists this year, with a vast range of devices (and an ever-increasing number of features) hitting the market just in time for the festive season.

But what does the latest research say about how effective they are?

Fitness trackers are trendy

Currently, about one in five Australians own one of these wearables, and about a quarter use a mobile app or website to monitor their activity levels and health. And sales are predicted to grow over the next five years.

The landscape of the market is fast changing. For years, Fitbit and Garmin were the market leaders. But Australians now favour Apple watches (used by 43% of people owning a wearable tracker) over Fitbit (35%) and Samsung watches (16%) over Garmin (13%).

So far fitness trackers have mostly been taken up by younger people: about one in four Australians aged 20-40 report using one, compared to just one in ten people aged 60 or older.

However, manufacturers are on a mission to change this, by adding features that allow users to monitor not just their fitness activity, but several other aspect of their health.

For instance, recent wearable models from all the leading manufacturers claim to measure a host of medical metrics, such as blood pressure, body fat levels, the amount of oxygen in your blood, your heart activity, and even identify when you've taken a fall (with a feature that lets you call for help).

Wearables get the basics right

Firstly, a multitude of studies have looked at the accuracy of wearable fitness trackers for measurements related to physical activity, including step counts, heart rate and number of calories burned. They show step counts are generally highly accurate, while heart rate and calories burned are reasonably accurate.

When study participants wear two different activity trackers at the same time, the numbers of steps, minutes of activity and calories burned aren't exactly the same, but they are correlated. That is, when one goes up so does the other, and vice versa. This suggests they are generally capturing the same information, albeit with slightly different sensitivity.

Evidence for sleep tracking is a little patchier. Wearables are pretty good at detecting bed time, wake time and overall sleep duration. But estimates for more technical metrics such as the "phases" of sleep - such as REM sleep - don't marry with medical-grade measurements taken by polysomnography.

Sometimes wearables go beyond the basics

In a 2019 Apple-sponsored study reported in the *New England Medical Journal*, 419,297 participants without known atrial fibrillation wore an Apple Watch. During the study, 2,161 of them received an irregular pulse notification, of which 84% were subsequently confirmed to have atrial fibrillation (an irregular and rapid heart beat).

This is a serious medical condition that requires treatment to prevent stroke.

The ability to alert users of a potential undiagnosed cardiac condition seems highly beneficial. Although, others have cautioned the Apple Watch can also miss cases of undiagnosed atrial fibrillation - which emphasises the importance of *never* relying on wearable metrics for medical purposes.

Another study published in September reaffirmed the Apple watch's electrocardiogram feature can detect serious cardiac irregularities. A similar study is currently underway to evaluate Fitbit's electrocardiogram feature, but results aren't out yet.

Building a more advanced tracker

In terms of detecting falls (which would be very useful for older individuals), scientists are developing wrist-worn devices that can accurately do this using accelerometer technology, which is the same underlying technology already used by wearables. So the technology is there, but at this point it's unclear whether the promising lab results will translate to accuracy in commercial wearables.

Meanwhile, the newest Samsung watch claims to measure blood pressure and body composition (such as fat mass, muscle mass and bone mass). Body composition is measured using a method called bioelectric impedance analysis.

When the user touches the watch with their opposite hand, it passes a weak electrical signal through the body and back to the watch. The body composition is then calculated using algorithms and the manually entered body weight.

At this stage, there's no data in the scientific literature to support the accuracy of these measurements, so we'd recommend taking them with a pinch of salt. Then again, only a few years ago the same criticism was made of electrocardiogram measurements from wearables - and these have subsequently shown to have merit.

Evidence says your effort will pay off

So that's the run down on accuracy, but do fitness trackers make a difference in people's lives?

Hundreds of studies have used wearable activity trackers to try to increase physical activity in various general and patient populations. Meta-analyses (which involve combining results of multiple studies) suggest the devices are effective in helping people become more physically active and lose weight.

A meta-analysis of 35 studies in various chronic disease populations suggested users added around 2,100 additional steps per day after they started using a wearable activity tracker. Other meta-analyses have suggested weight loss in the order of 1 to 1.5 kilograms, on average, over the duration of the studies (with the duration varying between studies).

And studies that look specifically at step-tracking over long periods suggest the benefits gained are still present (although smaller) up to four years after the device was first worn.

Accuracy and effectiveness aside, wearable users typically report being satisfied with their devices. So if you happen to get one in your Christmas stocking this year, keep in mind it could help with those New Year's fitness resolutions.

Ben Singh, Research fellow, *University of South Australia* and Carol Maher, Professor, Medical Research Future Fund Emerging Leader, *University of South Australia*

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Behind The Scenes At PC Update

Hugh Macdonald

I began as PC Update editor back in September 2019 and with my permanent step into the role, there were a lot of changes in how PC Update was produced and how it could be consumed. From a consumption point of view, it became web based for the first time, with each article able to be individually accessed from the MelbPC website. At the same time, it continued to be produced as a PDF for those that preferred to read it that way. This approach was explained when I first became editor and after some initial feedback, readers grew accustomed to the new format. But how the magazine is now produced has never really been discussed publicly, so I thought it would be interesting to give you an idea of the process that is involved.

When David Stonier-Gibson was still editor, immediately before me, PC Update was produced using LibreOffice. This was a change from producing it using Microsoft Word, and it was done so that anyone in the club could produce it using a free to download open-source tool in LibreOffice, and on any platform (Linux, Mac or Windows). However, it wasn't easy to produce using LibreOffice as there were quirks in getting pages laid out correctly and so it was decided that the process needed to be even easier, so that there were very few technological barriers to someone taking over in the future.

So here's how an edition comes together each month:

In the first place I receive articles in several different formats. Most of the articles that are syndicated from other APCUG magazines are received in Microsoft Word format. Then there are some articles that are received in LibreOffice OpenDocument format, some that are received in Rich Text Format, some that are received in text format and then there are the articles from *The Conversation* where I copy the HTML in and edit it.

From these articles that are received, they are then all copied into WordPress as posts. WordPress is the content management system (CMS) that the MelbPC website runs on and is the most widely used CMS on the Internet. Once the posts are in WordPress, I edit them and insert images where required. When they're finished, I add them to a category in WordPress called PC Update and tag them with the current month and year (e.g. 1221). I save them all as drafts so they're not visible to members until the issue is ready to go out in PDF form.

The next step I undertake is to generate a PDF of each article. This is done with a plugin called PDF & Print by BestWebSoft which has a free and paid version. The free version has all the features that are needed for producing PC Update. The process involves opening each article in a web browser, and then clicking the PDF button at the end, and saving the output. I sometimes make some minor changes to the layout here. If I notice that an article is going to finish with two sentences on an otherwise blank page for example, I will edit the text or reduce the size of an image to ensure it is more compact.

Once I have a PDF of each article, I then employ a piece of software called PDFSam (which stands for PDF Split and Merge). This is proprietary software, but it has a free version and is cross platform (available for Linux, Mac, and Windows). PDFSam merges all the individual PDF files into one file and generates a table of contents to sit at the front of the document and bookmarks to be used by any PDF reader software.

It's at this point that I usually send the issue off to the proof editors, Harry Lewis, Tim McQueen, and Paul Woolard. Once it comes back from them, I make any changes that they have suggested and usually repeat most of the steps I've outlined in the two paragraphs above to get the text of the issue correct. After this, it's time to produce a front cover for the issue.

Over the two- and a-bit years I've used several applications to produce the front cover. They've included

Apple Pages (for Mac), Microsoft Publisher (for Windows) and LibreOffice Draw (cross platform). Lately I've been sticking with LibreOffice Draw as it is cross platform, and it does everything I need. The process to produce the front cover involves going to Unsplash and finding an image that ties in with a general theme for the month (like networking) and downloading that. Then I produce the text for the front cover. The font I use is Ubuntu. Once the front cover is ready, I save it as a PDF. I then open up PDFSam again and combine the front cover and the PDF of the table of contents and all the articles.

The last step is to compress the finalised PDF to ensure that the file size is less than 2mb so that every member can receive the issue via email. For this I use PDF Compressor, which is just a simple website that usually reduces the file in size by about 75%.

So, there you have it. In some ways the original intentions of making PC Update easier to produce have been achieved. There is now minimal times that needs to be spent laying out each issue. It is now also entirely cross platform, and any member of the club could produce it. I've produced it on Linux, Mac and Windows, so anyone else could do the same. The production of the PDF version has added some complexity, with the need to download each article and produce the edition using PDFSam and LibreOffice Draw. But at least this part of the process is still entirely cross platform and once you learn how to do it, it is easy to reproduce each month.

Interesting Internet Finds

Steve Costello

A Quick Way To "Clear Your Web Browsing History And Data" ...

<https://technewsforyou.com/2021/03/01/a-quick-way-to-clear-your-web-browsing-history-and-data/>

I can't believe I did not know this before. This shortcut is easy to use. I will be clearing my browsing history and data more frequently from now on.

What Does About:Blank Mean (And Why Does It Matter)?

<https://www.maketecheasier.com/what-does-aboutblank-mean/>

I use "about:blank" as my home page in all my browsers, and I recommend you do too. This post explains what "about:blank" means and why it matters.

Here's How You Can Host Your Own VPN For Less Than \$1 A Month

<https://www.makeuseof.com/how-host-own-vpn/>

This post is for the more advanced users. I use a paid VPN whenever I am out and about using Wi-Fi. However, if running a business, I would probably host my own. Using the VPNs that I pay for is just more convenient for me at this time.

How To Use Calibre For Kindle - Step By Step Guide

<https://techwiser.com/use-calibre-guide-for-kindle/>

I have heard from more and more friends that they are now using a Kindle. The common question I get is how to easily manage their ebooks. I answer that they should use Calibre to manage their ebooks. This post provides a good how-to for Calibre. I use Calibre to manage my ebooks on all my e-reader devices, as it can easily convert (non DRM) files. I read on my phone, tablet, and computer.

How To Send Google Photos In Email

<https://davescomputertips.com/how-to-send-google-photos-in-email/>

Do you still download photos to your PC to send via email? It is no longer necessary. This post explains how to send a photo directly from your phone via email.

How To Enable Or Disable Fn Key In Any Laptop?

<https://www.thesharedweb.com/enable-or-disable-fn-key/>

I have heard from some that they don't like having to use two keys to get a function key to work. I prefer it that way myself, as I use the top row number keys like on a typewriter. For those that would like to enable using the function keys without having to press the Fn key at the same time, this post provides two options.

How To Delete Your Old Online Accounts (And Why You Should)

<https://www.howtogeek.com/714981/how-to-delete-your-old-online-accounts-and-why-you-should/>

I go through my online accounts quarterly and delete any that are no longer active or that I feel are no

longer relevant. This post explains how and why you should do the same. Note: I go through my online subscriptions quarterly and unsubscribe when one is no longer relevant or ends up being too much.

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Yammer Highlights November 2021

Dennis Parsons

Computer Help

Smart phones can be confusing for everyone at times and doubly so when you're on the other end of a phone call trying to sort out what they've done ☐ But that's another story.

For many older users smart phones can be particularly confusing and not easy to use - tap on the wrong thing and you're suddenly somewhere you didn't want to be with no idea where to go next. Double down with infrequent use, maybe some memory issues and less than great fine motor control makes for a difficult user experience. Then throw in lack of familiarity with the phone in question by the partner or person trying to provide help and a frustrating time is had by all.

Using a simpler interface than the standard Android one was suggested as a possible solution - my Dad is one such user who regularly gets himself tied in knots, so I installed "Elder Launcher" around six months ago and he's been getting on quite well with it judging from the reduced number of calls for help.

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1498936418582528>>

12:14 PM

Thursday, December 2

 **Apps**

 **Contacts**



Phone



Emergency Plus



Messages



mySA GOV



Camera



BOM Weather



All Apps

And if you want to confuse the pants off someone this is guaranteed to work - hold the up and down volume buttons down together on an Android phone for a few seconds. It certainly did for me when I accidentally did it!

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=942225915363328>>

Smart TV and other devices: Discussion of all devices 'smart'.

<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=88754405376>

This is a new group that looks like it might prove popular.

Jan bought herself a new smart TV and noting that while there was a Phone group for discussing smart phones and tablets there was no Yammer group addressing other smart devices so decided to create one. As ever with Yammer we aren't exactly strict on what is discussed and it will develop over time, but the initial aim is to cover consumer devices that have "smarts".

Peter asked "What sort of other devices should be included here?" and Jan responded "Smart devices, remote controllers, those sorts of things. We really didn't have a place to discuss consumer goods like this, so maybe it will fill a niche. As Christmas is coming, I'm sure there will be new things coming out that our members will be considering."

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1518871091683328>>

Windows

Frank discovered the "joys" of combining a newly upgraded operating system with new hardware when his wife tried to use a newly purchased Epson projector with a Lenovo laptop recently upgraded to Windows 11. His first question was how to roll back to Windows 10 but that wasn't an option due to it having to be done within ten days of upgrading and too much time had passed.

While the projector had a VGA and HDMI socket the laptop only had HDMI so it was suggested trying a monitor with an HDMI socket. USB was also suggested as a possible means to connect.

In the end Frank tried a VGA cable with a VGA-HDMI adaptor and that did the trick. Unfortunately we didn't work out exactly where the problem lay but at least it ended with the projector working with the laptop, which was the name of the game after all.

I must say he's a braver man than me upgrading the wife's laptop to Win11 like that!

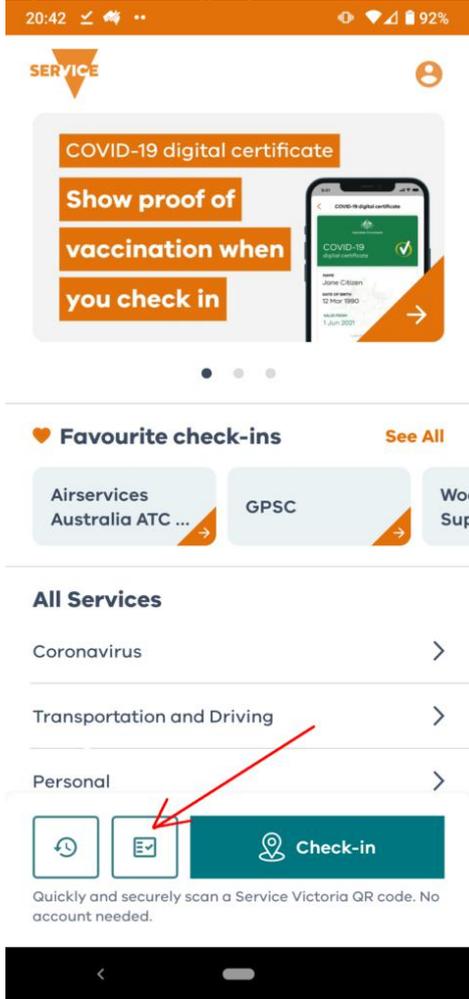
<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1506613951528960>>

Coronavirus Discussion & Comments

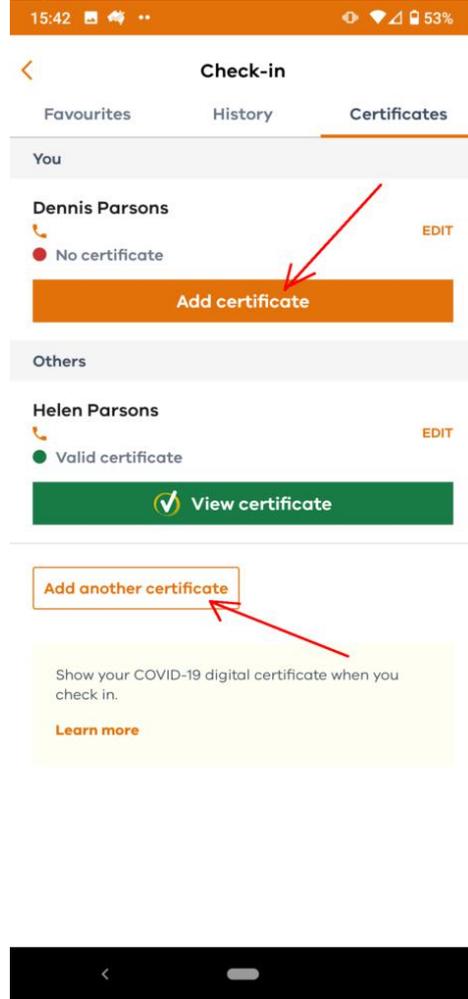
As mentioned last month you're able to upload multiple vaccination certificates to the Service Victoria app. It can be a little confusing so I created a step by step guide with images of how to do it on an Android phone in 13 easy steps! It's not as bad as it sounds. The person having their certificate added does need to have a Mygov account with their Medicare account linked to it.

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1496696443035648>>

1. Open the Service Victoria app & tap on the certificate button



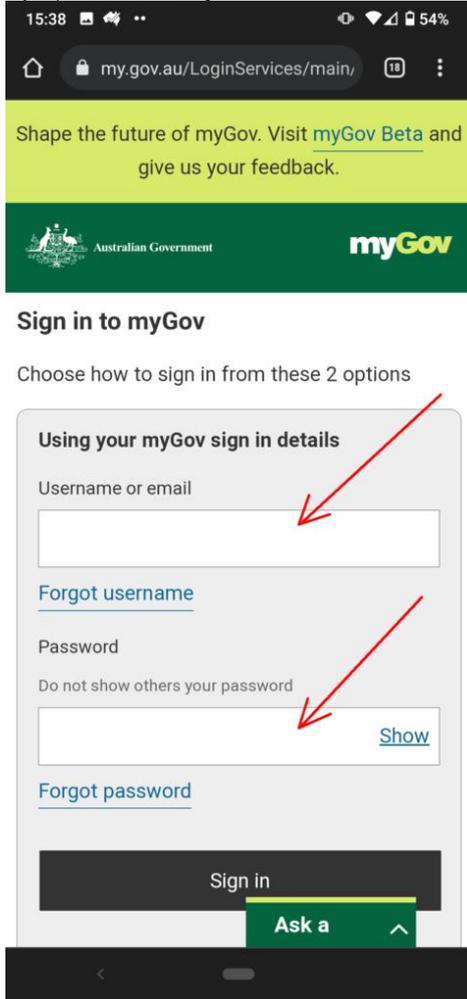
2. Tap "Add certificate" or "Add another certificate"



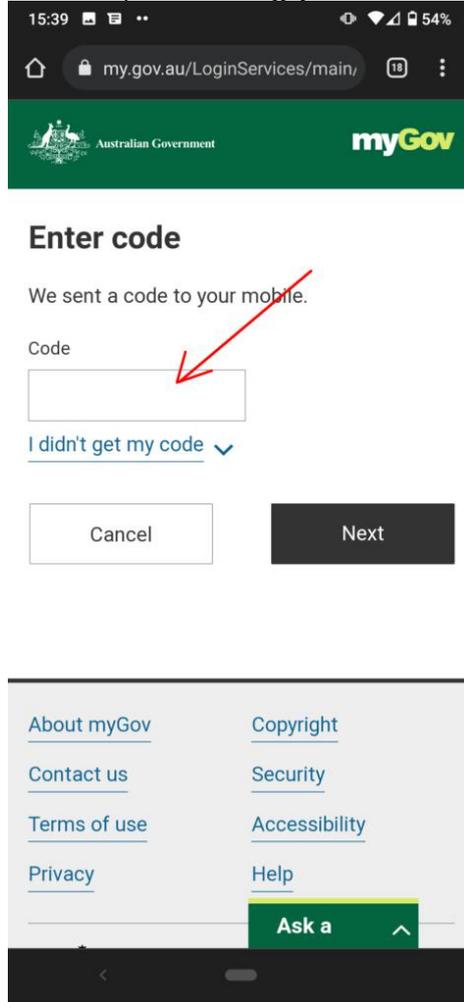
3. Tap "Add certificate via myGov" to open the myGov website



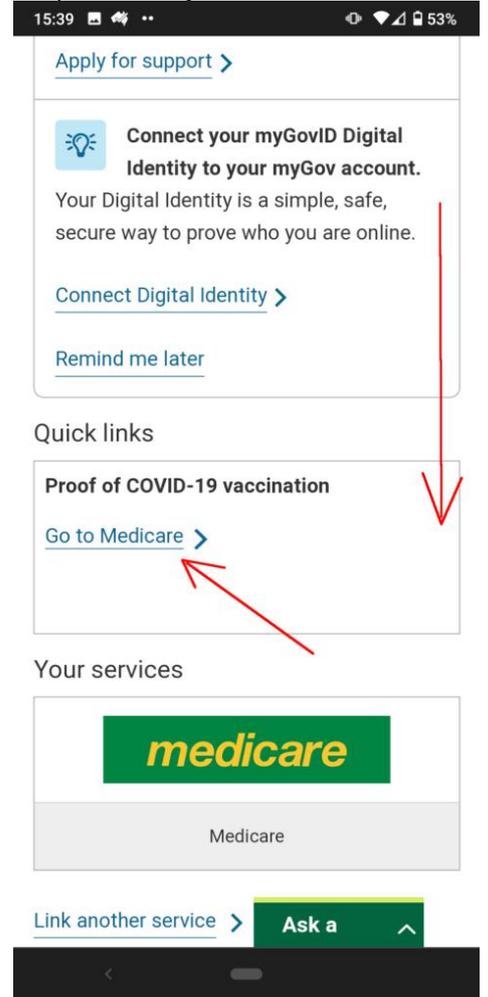
4. Sign into your myGov account. This will result in a code being sent to your phone as a text message.



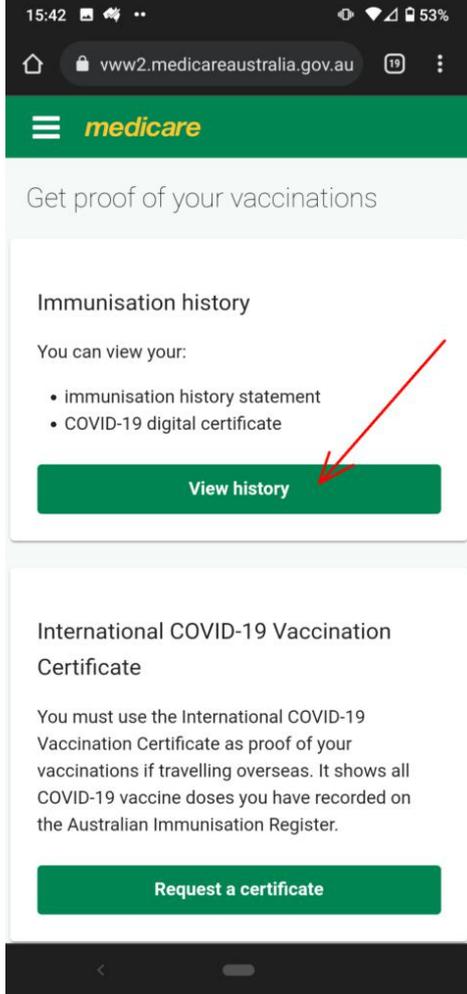
5. Enter the code you were sent when logging in.



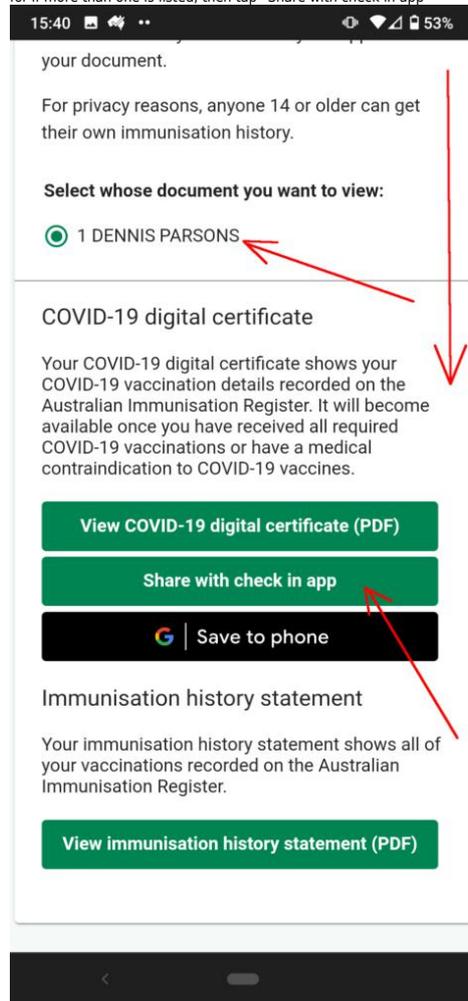
6. Scroll down your account details page & tap "Go to Medicare". This assumes you've linked Medicare to your myGov account. If it's not linked you'll need to arrange this first.



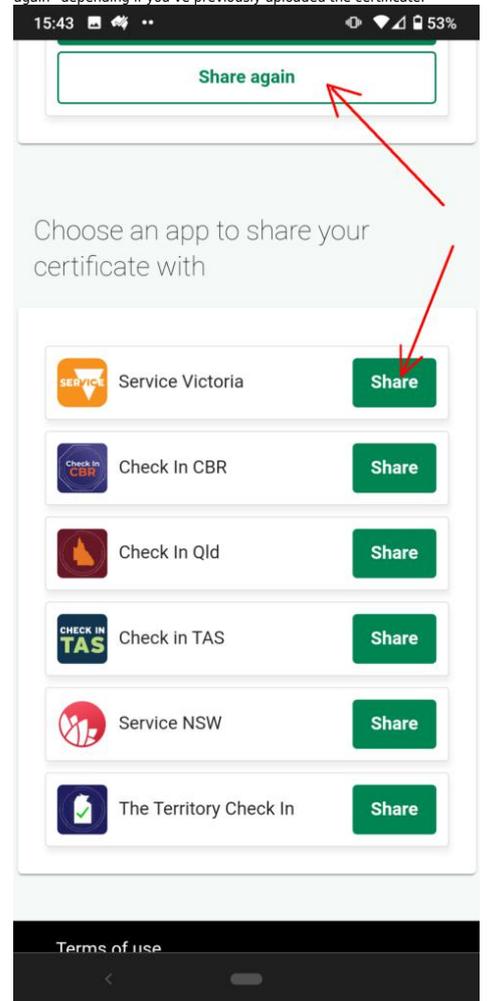
7. Once you've accessed your Medicare account tap "View history"



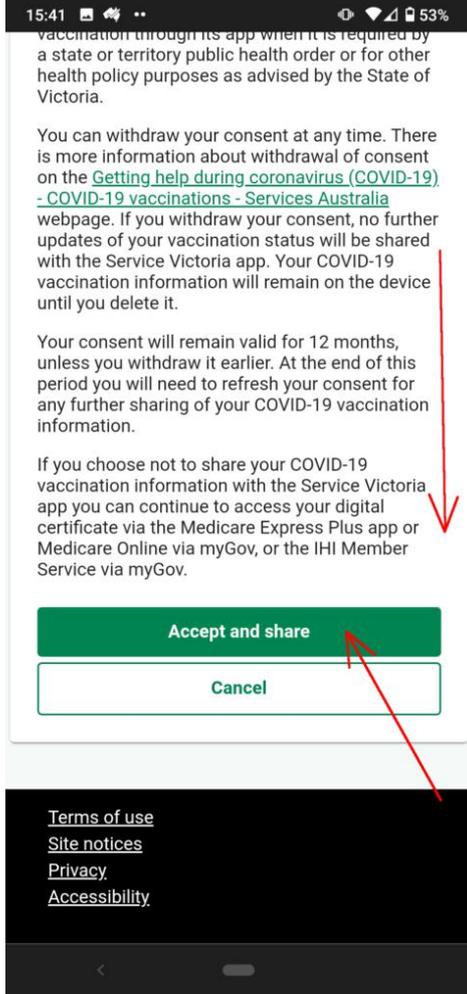
8. Scroll down, select the person you're wishing to add the certificate for if more than one is listed, then tap "Share with check in app"



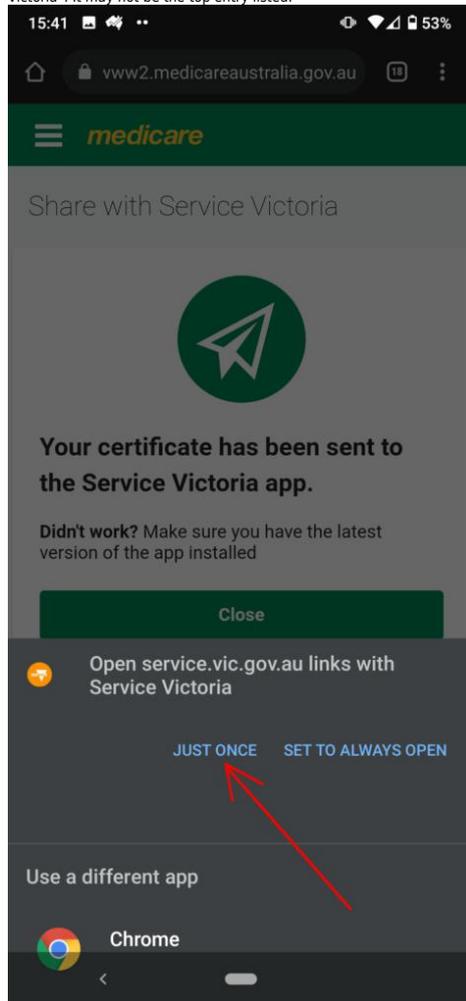
9. Locate the Service Victoria button and tap either "Share" or "Share again" depending if you've previously uploaded the certificate.



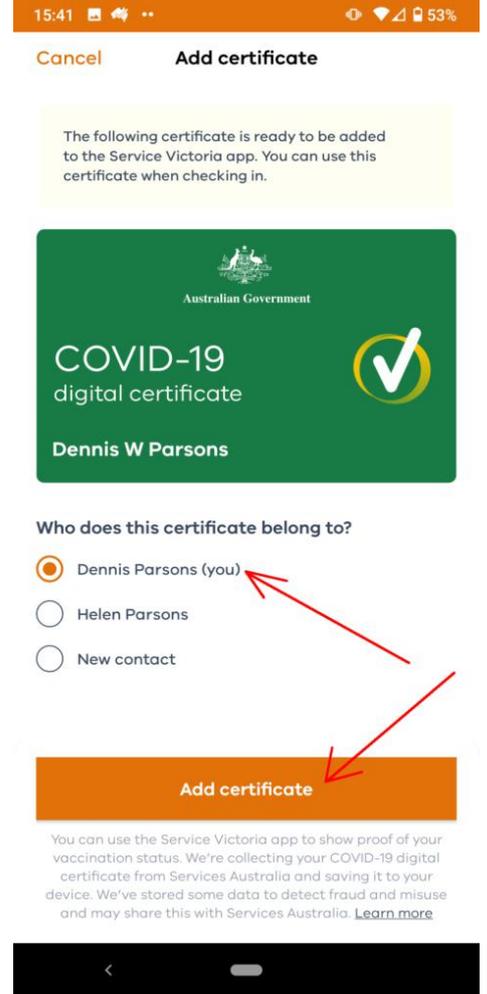
10. Scroll down & tap "Accept and share"



11. Tap "Just once" under "Open service.vic.gov.au links with Service Victoria". It may not be the top entry listed.



12. Select the person the certificate is for & tap "Add certificate"



13. You should now see a green dot next to "Valid certificate" & the green bar with "View certificate" under the relevant persons name & the job is done.

