



Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

13 November 2020

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Thank you for your letter dated 7 October 2020 setting out the Government's Statement of Expectations for the Australian Digital Health Agency (the Agency). I am pleased to provide the Agency's Statement of Intent in response.

In addition to being published on the Department of Health's (Department) website, the Government's Statement of Expectations and this Statement of Intent will be published on the Agency's website.

VISION

There has never been a more critical time to drive and accelerate the Agency's vision of better health for all Australians enabled by seamless, safe and secure digital health services.

Through this challenging year, the Agency is proud to have played an integral part in significant Government initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included both an uplift in the use of the My Health Record (MHR) to support information sharing across the health system and the rollout of electronic prescribing – now live across the whole of Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and metropolitan Sydney, with the rest of Australia expected to follow by the end of 2020. More than 500,000 electronic prescriptions have already been issued.

These initiatives have not only provided essential support to Australians at a time when more traditional healthcare service delivery has been impossible, but they will continue to enhance the experience of healthcare providers and users of the health system well into the future.

As we move into 2021, we look forward as an Agency to ensuring that our strategic direction, operations and outcomes are fit for purpose in this evolving digital health landscape and align with Government priorities.

An important element of this will be the enhancement and maintenance of key components of the national digital health infrastructure to support a more agile, user centred digital health system. We will continue the momentum in programs such as electronic prescribing, helping facilitate new models of care and supporting and expanding other national initiatives.

The Agency will also continue to support the health sector's progress towards delivering the key priorities of the National Digital Health Strategy 2018–2022, including foundational elements such as the Healthcare Identifiers Service, Clinical Terminology Services and the National Authentication Service for Health.

In addition, the Agency will continue to play a pivotal role in responding to emerging priorities, including rapid, responsive support to Government when there are threats to the healthcare ecosystem, whether they be bushfires, a pandemic, cyber security attacks or other unforeseen events.

Our work supporting the Department on an anticipated national COVID-19 vaccine rollout draws on our strong human centred design capability and has helped enable joint design thinking on re-use and enhancement of existing of national digital health infrastructure. Reu-use could include MHR and other existing supply chain delivery and record services in a vaccine rollout. Similarly, we are already working closely with the Department to support the Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and are positioned to a play a strong enabling role in the delivery of your Primary Healthcare 10 Year Plan.

PRIORITIES

Australia's National Digital Health Strategy

Under the Intergovernmental Agreement on National Digital Health (IGA), the Agency is responsible for reviewing and coordinating a national digital health strategy that sets the direction for Australia's digital health ecosystem and meets the needs of parties to the IGA. Early preparatory work for the 2022 national digital health strategy is underway. We will work closely with the Commonwealth, states and territories (jurisdictions) through the Board's Jurisdictional Advisory Committee to ensure that the next strategy provides a national direction and supports jurisdictions to deliver on digital health priorities.

In focusing on the most significant priorities in the National Digital Health Strategy 2018–2022, the Agency has worked closely with the Department and the National Health Chief Information Officers' Roundtable to agree an implementation approach and timetable to develop a National Health Interoperability Plan by mid–2021. Maturing the enablers of interoperability, such as standards governance, wider adoption of healthcare identifiers and use of procurement requirements with new IT system investments, will help improve care transitions, access to pathology and imaging results, medication management, electronic prescribing and better public health registries and reporting.

My Health Record

In line with our regulatory requirements and community expectations, in 2020–21 the Agency will continue to respond to the needs of consumers and healthcare providers by continually improving and expanding the MHR system. This builds on work we have delivered in 2020 responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in which we uplifted the MHR to include more Australian Immunisations Register information, making it readily available to consumers and healthcare providers. The Agency is also working with Government and healthcare providers to improve systems connection to and use by aged care facilities to ensure that the benefits of connected care can be realised, and to ensure that our active education and communication approach will continue to target increased awareness and use of the MHR amongst consumers and healthcare providers.

As the MHR system is a key foundational element in transforming traditional models of practice, it provides an opportunity to support healthcare integration and deliver significant improvements in the quality and efficiency of healthcare. To progress these opportunities the Agency has established the National Infrastructure Modernisation Program, a program of work designed to modernise the Agency's managed and operated national digital health capabilities, drive innovation and enable uplift in digital services.

Regulatory Oversight

The Agency will continue to work closely with the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Healthcare and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) to maintain and promote privacy and safety across the healthcare system.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Agency and the OAIC provides the framework for our ongoing relationship and sets in place how the OAIC will provide advice, assistance and independent regulatory services over the management of personal information in the MHR system. To connect and cooperate on digital health-related privacy matters, the Agency and the OAIC have a routine timetable of executive-level and officer-level engagement.

The funding model that underpins the OAIC's regulatory oversight of the MHR system sees the appropriation channelled through the Agency and then provided to OAIC under the MOU. This is administratively burdensome and could be seen to undermine the independence, transparency and

accountability of OAIC's role. For this reason, the Agency will work with the Department and OAIC through the Budget process to propose a change in the funding arrangement from the 2021–22 financial year such that OAIC is directly appropriated for its MHR regulatory role.

A key priority of the Agency is to enable transparent and sustainable governance of digital health standards. This involves identifying the structures and processes through which industry, governments, healthcare representatives and consumers can partner and collaborate on these standards. In turn, the standards will create the foundations for software conformance to build quality and enable the greatest benefits from digital health for healthcare providers and all Australians.

RELATIONSHIP WITH MINISTER AND PORTFOLIO

Relationship with Responsible Minister

The Agency will continue to provide you with accurate and timely advice and keep you informed about our work, especially early advice on issues or risks for which the Government would be accountable in Parliament and other significant issues related to the Agency's core business.

The Agency will also maintain a close working relationship with you and the Department to align future work with the Government's health reform agenda. This includes providing support to the next phase of the current legislative review of the *My Health Records Act 2012* and continuing the timely implementation of the recommendations of the Australian National Audit Office performance audit on the MHR system.

Relationship with the Department of Health and the Health Portfolio

The Agency will continue its close working relationships with the Department and health portfolio agencies, including the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and agencies outside the portfolio including the Digital Transformation Agency, Services Australia and the CSIRO's Australian e-Health Research Centre.

While the Agency is engaging with the Department on a wide range of digital health reforms and projects under the Agency's annual workplan, with regular senior officer meetings to ensure alignment of priorities, we will also look to formalise the way we engage and collaborate by documenting the principles, governance and management information which will facilitate successful delivery of Government-led digital health policy.

Relationship with Stakeholders

The Agency will continue to develop and maintain close working partnerships with all state and territory governments, clinical and consumer peak organisations, software developers, health industry bodies, healthcare providers and consumers. One of the Agency's key strengths, which we will continue to build in 2021, is its ability to convene multiple stakeholders into a space that translates vision into program co-design and then into delivery of outcomes. The Agency will also continue to engage directly with key stakeholders through its digital health awareness, education and communications programs and to support our program advisory groups to inform and guide the delivery of our work program.

The Agency is committed to partnering across sectors, jurisdictions and internationally to develop and strengthen our culture of co-design and to ensure digital health solutions are fit for purpose and improve the healthcare outcomes for all Australians. The Agency will continue to operate effective and efficient skills-based governance committees to ensure our programs have best practice governance and program delivery oversight and are strategically aligned to the outcomes in the National Digital Health Strategy 2018–22.

ORGANISATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Organisational Governance

The Agency strongly supports arrangements for accountability, good governance and transparency in its operations as a corporate Commonwealth entity. The Board, as accountable authority, expects the Agency to align with government priorities and actively seek opportunities to improve its efficiency and effectiveness and provide value for money through prudent use of public resources.

The Agency will continue to highlight key strategic priorities in its Corporate Plan over a rolling four-year period (including initiatives in the Australian Digital Health Agency Work Plan), along with strategic risks that may affect the Agency's ability to achieve its mission. The Agency will incorporate performance measures in its Corporate Plan and report on outcomes against each measure in its Annual Report to

Parliament to provide a transparent line of sight between the use of resources and the results achieved by the Agency. Both the Corporate Plan and Annual Report are provided to you and each other jurisdiction's health minister.

The Board has recently provided feedback to the Department on suggested amendments to the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Establishing the Australian Digital Health Agency) Rule 2016* to improve the Agency's operations, including the role and composition of the Board's advisory committees to ensure they are fit for purpose and continue to provide value. The Board and the Agency will continue to work closely with the Department to progress this work.

Financial Management

The Agency is committed to complying with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and operating within the Government's financial management framework and Budget Process Operational Rules.

The Agency will continue to actively review its operations to ensure the efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources.

The Department is leading the re-negotiation of the IGA that currently provides funding of \$64.5 million per year to deliver key objectives of the National Digital Health Strategy. The Agency is actively engaged with the Department to support discussions with stakeholders for the next IGA, including provisions to clearly articulate the mechanism to move funding between financial years and related governance arrangements.

The Agency will continue to improve operational efficiency and costs through the National Infrastructure Modernisation Program. This includes delivering infrastructure services that can be used across the health sector to minimise the need for investment in multiple infrastructure platforms.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We know that Australians want a healthcare system which puts people first. Digital health is an enabler for new models of care, including connected care and telehealth. The Board is also keenly aware of your vision for and commitment to digital health as a fundamental pillar of a safe, equitable and efficient healthcare system for Australia.

I believe that the Board and the Agency can continue to play a strong role in delivering on your vision. We are fully committed to supporting you in driving better health outcomes for all Australians through digital healthcare initiatives. In particular, the Agency can play a key role in supporting better connected care between different settings, such as primary care and the relationship between residential aged care and acute care settings. Connected care facilitates safer and higher quality care for all patients including medicines management and reducing adverse drug events, making better informed treatment decisions and better coordinated care.

As you know the Board has recently engaged a new Chief Executive Officer, Ms Amanda Cattermole PSM, who brings with her a wealth of experience and enthusiasm. Ms Cattermole has prioritised reviewing the Agency's functional and organisational structure to ensure that it supports outcome delivery and that the Agency's internal governance arrangements are fit for purpose and provide a strong framework for an efficient and effective operating model.

On behalf of the Board I welcome and support the Government's expectations of the Agency. Both the Board and the Agency look forward to working constructively with the Government to deliver effective digital technologies and services for the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

Yours sincerely



Dr Elizabeth Deveny
Chair, Australian Digital Health Agency Board