Secure Messaging Program Information Sheet

Secure messaging – the problem

Reliable, secure provider-to-provider communication is a key component of digitally enabled integrated and coordinated care across the Australian health sector. Secure messaging is a core foundational capability required to enable interoperability and safe, seamless, secure, and confidential information sharing across all healthcare providers and consumers.

While there are significant pockets of secure messaging in use, for example, supporting pathology communications and discharge summaries from certain hospitals, there continues to be the lack of a consistent approach to secure messaging and information exchange across Australian healthcare. This has led to significant challenges across the sector.

Secure Messaging Program

The Agency’s current Secure Messaging Program aims to work collaboratively with industry and suppliers of secure messaging solutions and clinical software to reduce existing barriers to adoption and provide implementable solutions. Several key areas have been identified as barriers for implementation and form the core of the immediate technical work program:

- Simplifying the message structure and supporting several different content formats;
- Assessing the use of commercial security certificates;
- Assessing the use of propriety provider identifiers; and
- Improving access to reliable provider address information.

The Agency has established a Technical Working Group, with members from industry, to co-design solutions going forward.

Early proof of concept implementation projects are being established to validate the solution approach and scalability. The initial implementation projects will be underpinned by scenarios that cover:

- Discharge summaries from hospital to general practitioners or other providers;
- Referrals from general practitioners to specialists and / or allied health; and
- Reports from allied health to general practitioners, specialists or other providers.

In parallel with early co-development and implementation activity, the program will develop a future digital communication strategy and roadmap to support the needs of Australia’s healthcare system going forward.

The program is led by Bettina McMahon, Executive General Manager, Government and Industry Collaboration at the Agency, who is responsible for driving industry adoption and usability of digital health. There are three lead program sponsors: Dr Nathan Pinskier, who is a GP in Melbourne and Chair of the RACGP Expert Committee eHealth & Practice Systems; Dr Zoran Bolevich who is the Chief Executive for eHealth NSW; and Ms Fiona Panagoulas, who is a strong advocate for consumers and carers.

Please send your questions, comments, suggestions and ideas about this problem and this project to the Secure Messaging Program Manager, Sari.McKinnon@digitalhealth.gov.au.