



Media release

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WA's Wirraka Maya Health Service leads the way in providing better patient care

An Aboriginal community health service in Western Australia has produced record results in the use of technology to ensure better connected care for local patients.

Senior Medical Officer at Wirraka Maya Health Service in Port Hedland, WA, Dr Yolande Knight said: "We rely on My Health Record to keep us updated on patient pathology, imaging, medication, dispensing and history records.

"We find it helpful because a lot of our patients are transient, moving from one region to another, so it can be difficult to get their comprehensive files.

"We can see what other doctors have requested and performed, overcoming the delays waiting for records requested from other practices and providers. Equally, we can upload and share what we've done, so when the patient attends elsewhere, their record is current and available to other practitioners.

"We can also see what scripts were dispensed. It's invaluable that PathWest results are automatically available. This helped us a lot with recent COVID-19 test results, where at times it was quicker to see the result on the patient's record than to join the phone queue to get the result."

Over 2020, the Wirraka Maya Health Service uploaded the ninth highest number of Shared Health Summaries in Western Australia – this is a summary of a patient's key health information, and the highest number of Event Summaries in the state - this is a summary of a key consultation to My Health Record. Also, the health service has viewed more uploaded documents than any other primary care provider in Western Australia.

A key benefit to patients is that they can use the Shared Health Summaries and prescription information that have been uploaded by Wirraka Maya as proof of any underlying health conditions so they can obtain an early Covid-19 vaccination.

Recent changes to My Health Record include a new consolidated view of immunisation information from the Australian Immunisation Register and the individual's record (shared health summaries and event summaries).

Wirraka Maya Health Service originated from the efforts of Aboriginal people to establish a health service to address the unmet needs of Aboriginal people in the Port Hedland and South Hedland areas and surrounding communities. It commenced the delivery of clinical services in 1996.

The service now has more than 7,000 residents registered and actively engaged in wellbeing, primary care, and prevention programs across the region.

Hedland is one of three communities across the country currently working with the Australian Digital Health Agency to leverage technology to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

Australian Digital Health Agency Consumer Advocate, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Champion and Co-Chair of the Agency's Reconciliation Working Group and national Medicines Safety Program, Steve Renouf, congratulated Wirraka Maya for its commitment to digital health.



“It’s great to see an Aboriginal-controlled health service leading the way in achieving outstanding results in the use of digital technology,” he said.

“This commitment to digital service delivery will continue to enhance clinical outcomes in local communities and help breach the digital divide that can disadvantage remote patients.”

Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) Public Health Medical Officer, Dr Marianne Wood, said: “The Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) sector in WA has been a leader in the use of My Health Record and we are very proud of the great work by Wirraka Maya.

“Many ACCHS recognised, early on, the enormous potential of the record in improving the care of Aboriginal patients, particularly for those who travel widely and receive care from many different health care providers across this enormous state,” she said.

“AHCWA has been very active in supporting both ACCHS and the wider WA health sector in the My Health Record project, recognising that the benefit of the record is far greater when there is a collective effort. The Hedland Community of Excellence Project and the work of Wirraka Maya shows what can be achieved.”

WA Primary Health Alliance General Manager, Primary Care Innovation and Development, Bernadette Kenny, said “This is the result of the whole team at Wirraka Maya working together and understanding the real benefits to their community when it comes to utilising the digital health services available to them. Their exemplary use of My Health Record ensures their clients are supported throughout their health journey both in the Pilbara and beyond by providing vital clinical information at a time when it is most needed.”

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About the Australian Digital Health Agency

When it comes to improving the health of all Australians, the role of digital innovation and connection is a vital part of a modern, accessible healthcare system. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, digital health has seen exponential growth in relevance and importance, making it more pertinent than ever for all Australians and healthcare providers.

Better patient healthcare and health outcomes are possible when you have a health infrastructure that can be safely accessed, easily used, and responsibly shared.

To achieve this, the [National Digital Health Strategy](#) is establishing the foundations for a sustainable health system that constantly improves. It underpins and coordinates work that is already happening between governments, healthcare providers, consumers, innovators and the technology industry.

For further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.

The Australian Digital Health Agency is a statutory authority in the form of a corporate Commonwealth entity.