



Council for Connected Care

A better-connected healthcare system for all Australians

Communiqué

The ninth meeting of the Council for Connected Care (the Council) was held in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) on Thursday 12 June 2025. Attendees were welcomed to Mparntwe through a traditional smoking ceremony led by local Elders Joyce Ampetyane Palmer and Sherry Lowah, acknowledging the deep cultural significance of the land and the long history of connection to it by Arrernte people.

The Council acknowledges, with profound respect and sympathy, recent events that have deeply affected Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and Chair of the Council, welcomed attendees and introduced new member, Dr Andrew Bell, Chief Clinical Information Officer, NT Health. The Chair also thanked departing member Professor Wendy Chapman for her significant contributions to the Council over the last two years and for her tenure as the inaugural Chair of the Australian Digital Health Standards Advisory Group (SAG).

The June meeting focused on the realities of accessing healthcare from rural and remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, commencing with a visit to the Alice Springs Royal Flying Doctor (RFDS) facility. Members of the RFDS team showed Council members various aspects of their operations, including the challenges and opportunities they face in supporting rural and remote communities, as well as the ways in which digital innovation is helping to support the care they provide. Members were shown advances in virtual care and the use of artificial intelligence and discussed the critical role of My Health Record (MHR) in improving access to health information for consumers and clinicians in these settings.

To support the key theme of this Council meeting, the Australian Digital Health Agency produced a [video](#) capturing the lived experiences of people in rural and remote communities. It featured voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, alongside clinicians who live and work in these areas. Following the screening, a Q&A session was held with a number of the people featured in the video.

The panel discussion underscored the critical importance of reliable connectivity, community trust and the need for healthcare to be both affordable and locally accessible, reinforcing the principle that every Australian deserves an equal right to healthcare, regardless of where they live.

The Council recognises the courage and generous sharing of time and ideas of the community members featured in the video and in the panel discussion, and commits to taking action within their respective areas of influence, and as a collective group, in response to the matters raised – the very reasons why the Council convened in Alice Springs to focus on the issues facing First Nations peoples in health and more broadly.



Following the panel, Mr David Reeve, Health Systems Manager at the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) and Professor Jenny May AM, National Rural Health Commissioner, presented the challenges experienced by many rural and remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Key themes included the urgent need to improve digital literacy, enhance connectivity and reduce digital poverty and the importance of equipping and supporting local workforces to effectively use digital tools – tools that must be affordable, culturally appropriate and supported by offline access, especially during severe weather events. Participants also examined funding models for rural, remote and regional areas, acknowledging persistent disparities across Australia.

Addressing culturally appropriate care, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress shared success stories on the transfer of clinics to Aboriginal community control, highlighting the need to remove barriers to education to uplift the number of tertiary-qualified Aboriginal health professionals. Key discussions explored the use of My Health Record, culturally led co-design of digital systems, workforce development and the importance of long-term commitment to strengthening remote primary health care.

Several presentations highlighted the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, focusing on emergency care, access to information, mental health, remote primary healthcare and strengthening healthcare systems in remote areas. These key themes were further explored in two panel discussions, where community members generously shared their time and insights, emphasising the importance of connectivity and examining current efforts to reduce health disparities and overcome barriers to connected care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and rural and remote communities.

A breakout session facilitated by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care explored clinical governance for digitally enabled care in rural and remote communities. Members shared feedback on the draft National Model for Clinical Governance developed to align with modern healthcare challenges.

The Council participated in a series of roundtable updates to engage with current and upcoming initiatives being undertaken by member organisations including:

- SANE Forums and Yarning Space – Online peer support for people with complex mental health needs and their carers
- Lung Cancer Screening – Low-dose CT scans for early detection in high-risk individuals aged 50–70
- Remote Dialysis – Improved home dialysis experiences with wireless data sharing to hospitals
- HITIDE Project – Telehealth technology enhancing care access and support for remote clinicians
- Medical Incapacity Review – A new policy to streamline medical data sharing across agencies.



Highlighted topics from the day's discussions included the importance of delivering culturally appropriate care close to Country – care that is built on trust and supported by community and kin – and the need to ensure that digital health models are co-designed and governed by the communities they serve, ensuring care is accessible, respectful, empowering, and culturally grounded. Equitable access to internet and mobile connectivity, including strengthening support for use of digital tools, were recognised as key improvements to reduce the digital divide.

A discussion on the use of Healthcare Identifiers for successful data matching was led by Services Australia who reported improved match rate statistics across vendors, software products and organisations in rural and remote regions.

Members also reviewed quarterly activities of the Australian Digital Health Standards Advisory Group and the *National Healthcare Interoperability Plan 2023-28* progress report for the period January to March 2025.

Key considerations that arose from the day for all members when designing and delivering digital solutions in regional and remote areas were:

- **Culturally Appropriate Care** – use storytelling and animation to communicate health messages. This builds trust and improves understanding. Where appropriate, reduce the need to travel for care and enable choice in healthcare providers, including gender preference.
- **Workforce** – create employment opportunities for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Address skills shortages in rural and remote areas through partnerships with agencies and CCC members.
- **Digital and English Literacy** – enhance English literacy to support digital health engagement and access. This could be addressed through community-based educational programs and partnerships with local schools and organisations.
- **Partnerships and Learning** – collaborate with others to achieve the best outcomes. In the NT partner with NT Health and other organisations to build on their open EHR, Territory Kidney Care and other initiatives such as the Lung Cancer Screening and remote kidney dialysis as examples.
- **Clinical Governance** – engage with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care on the new National Model for Clinical Governance and provide feedback to ensure the model supports digitally enabled care in rural and remote settings.

The Council for Connected Care is committed to fostering an environment of support, partnership, listening, learning and understanding, ensuring that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are truly heard, valued, and sit at the heart of decision making for First Nations peoples and communities in all matters that impact them.

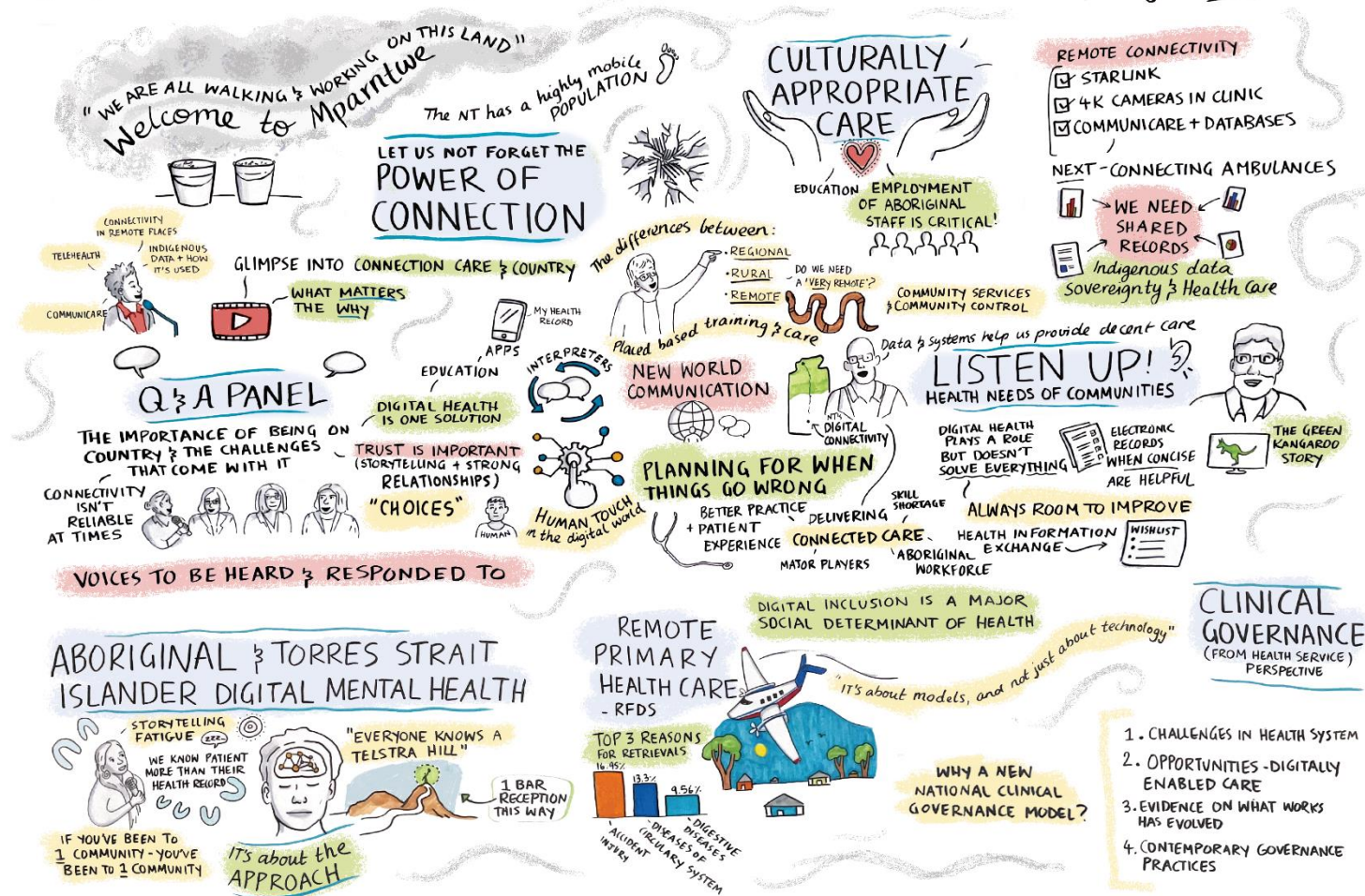
The next meeting of the Council will take place via videoconference on 21 August 2025, with a focus on the Council's Annual Review.



Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

COUNCIL FOR CONNECTED CARE 12th June 2025 Alice Springs PART 1



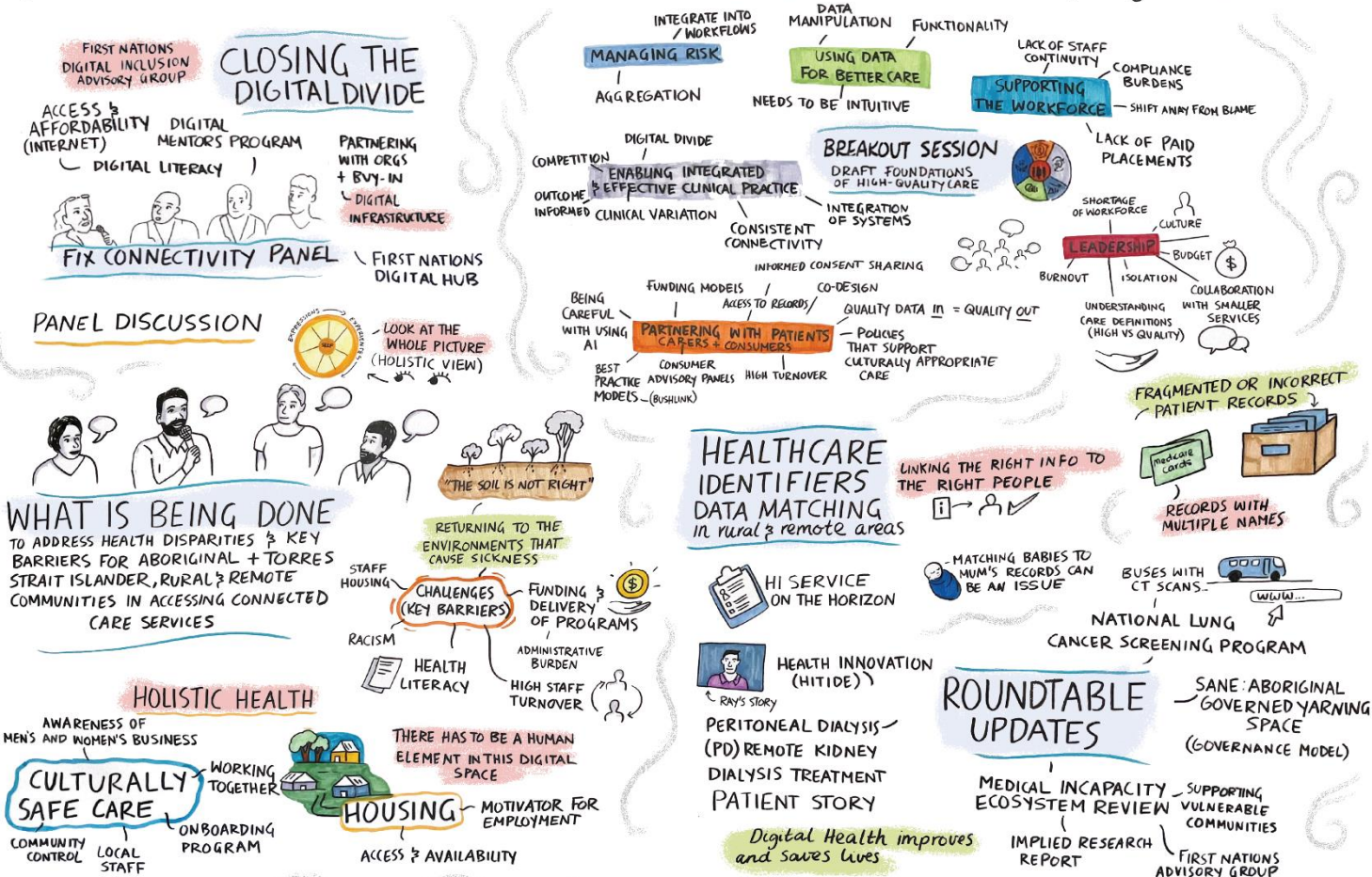
OFFICIAL



Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

COUNCIL FOR CONNECTED CARE 12th June 2025 Alice Springs PART 2



SCRIBED BY SAMMY@COOLAMON CREATIVE ON ARRERNTJE LAND

OFFICIAL