Council for Connected Care

A better-connected healthcare system for all Australians

Communiqué

The eleventh meeting of the Council for Connected Care (Council) brought members together in Canberra to focus on improving transitions of care - critical handover moments when patients move between settings, providers, or digital platforms and where connected care can strengthen patient outcomes. Through strategic updates and collaborative discussions, the Council explored opportunities to strengthen continuity, integration and consumer-centred approaches across Australia's connected care ecosystem.

Council members toured Canberra Hospital to observe digital health in action, gaining firsthand insight into real-time coordination in the Emergency Department, ICU and Pathology using technologies like the ACT's Digital Health Record (DHR) and their pathology solution that has been embedded in the hospital's clinical workflows. The visit also highlighted the role of the Integrated Operations Centre (IOC) in managing patient flow and ensuring continuity of care. The experience provided practical context for the benefits and challenges of implementing digital solutions in a complex healthcare environment.

To begin the formal Council meeting, Ngunnawal Elder Aunty Violet Sheridan provided a Welcome to Country for Council members and guests. Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan, Chair of the Council, introduced new Council members: Mr Christopher Radbone, recently appointed Chair of the Australian Digital Health Standards Advisory Group; Mr Nicholas Elmitt, Head of Quality and Research at Ageing Australia; and Ms Alice Kett, Strategic Lead Education from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) provided an update on their work on transitions of care initiatives, which aim to reduce clinical risk and improve outcomes through interoperable digital systems. Members discussed this work in the context of the National Healthcare Interoperability Plan 2023-2028 and agreed to share implementation exemplars and feedback to inform future guidance.

The Council also received an update on the ACT Health Transformation Project 3 years post-implementation. The Council was informed about how the DHR and MyDHR portal have improved clinical workflows, patient engagement, and data access across ACT Health services and an ACT healthcare consumer shared her experience of navigating a complex health journey requiring multiple surgeries, emergency admissions, and care from multidisciplinary teams across ACT and NSW. In a compelling address to the Council, the healthcare consumer highlighted the vital role digital health played in her treatment, keeping her care on track, enabling seamless hospital transfers and ensuring clinicians had the information they needed when it mattered most.

Council members received an update on the 1800Medicare service and its evolving role in connected care. The upcoming rebrand and the planned improvements to Healthdirect to

extend and have better-connected triage services, aims to boost uptake and accessibility, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This will be supported by a national campaign and engagement with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA). Members discussed the strategic importance of 1800Medicare in supporting equitable, coordinated access to care, helping patients navigate transitions confidently and receive timely health support.

Another key update at the meeting was on the Health Connect Australia Image Access Discovery initiative, led by the Australian Digital Health Agency in partnership with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) and the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA). The initiative is aiming to solve long-standing challenges in accessing prior medical imaging by considering a federated national model that enables secure, point-of-care access to prior images and reports without centralised storage, leveraging shared services such as identity, consent, and audit. Dr Nick Ferris, Chair of RANZCR's Digital Health Committee, presented progress from the discovery phase, including stakeholder consultations, user journey mapping, and alignment with recent legislative reforms.

Mater Health shared its strategic approach to advancing digital integration through public–private collaboration across Queensland, including on virtual cardiac rehabilitation, expanded telehealth, and innovative training programs developed with commercial partners. Alastair Sharman, Group Chief, Digital Technology provided detail on these initiatives and how have improved access for regional communities focusing on consumer-centred digital health innovation.

The Council received updates from NACCHO on its Social and Emotional Wellbeing Clinical Terminology Project, which aims to embed culturally responsive, standardised terminology in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations; from AHPA on work to standardise allied health data to support interoperability and collaborative care planning; and from the RACGP in relation to its Disaster Management and Evacuation Centre Framework, highlighting the role of GPs in maintaining continuity of care during emergencies.

As a light-hearted and thought-provoking conclusion to the final Council meeting of 2025, several members participated in an interactive debate, moderated by the Australian Digital Health Agency's Chief Digital Officer Peter O'Halloran. The debate invited Council members to explore the balance between patient privacy and the need for interoperable, coordinated healthcare, centring on whether community-based clinicians should have access to hospital records, with teams presenting a range of diverse views, highlighting real-world implications and encouraging reflection on future policy, system design and how best to ensure that Australians benefit from a connected health system.
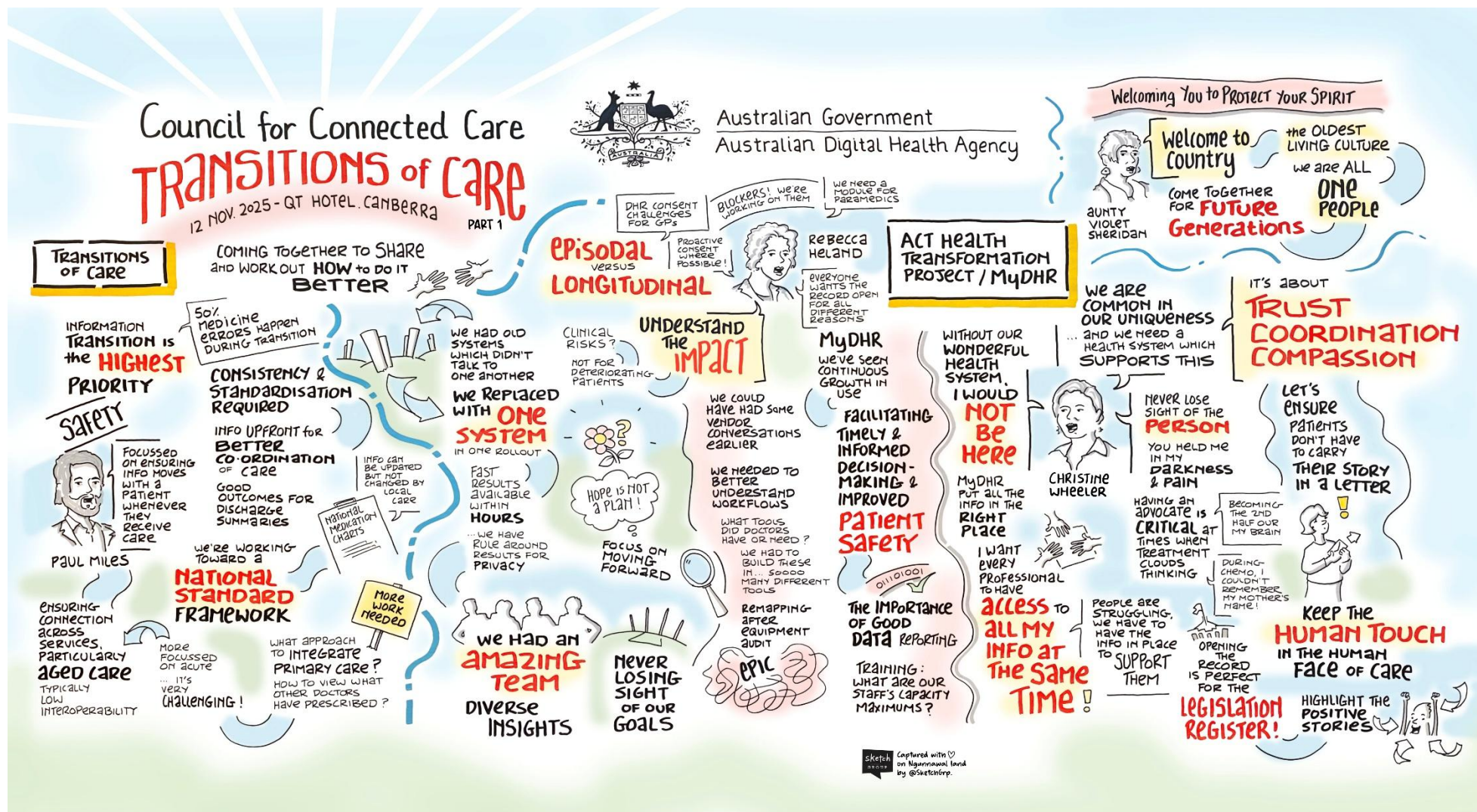
Thank you to all members of the Council for Connected Care who have given their time, their insights and their innovations so generously throughout 2025. Together, they have helped steward more than 64% of the actions under the National Healthcare Interoperability Plan 2023-2028.

The next meeting of the Council will be held on 12 March 2026.