Provider CONNECT Australia™

Helping healthcare providers stay connected

Provider Connect Australia™ (also known as PCA™) is an initiative of the Australian Digital Health Agency to help healthcare provider organisations update their business information in a single source. It connects healthcare provider organisations with their business partners to streamline updates of the services they provide and the practitioners that provide them. This significantly reduces the time that healthcare provider organisations spend updating their business partners, ensures that updates are not missed, and reduces the transcription errors that occur with manual updates.

PCA™ also creates unique identifiers for healthcare services, service delivery locations and practitioners' service delivery roles, allowing these to be reliably identified and linked across the healthcare system.

These unique identifiers complement existing national identifiers for healthcare provider organisations and individuals.

The registration challenge

Healthcare provider organisations rely on many business partners to support their healthcare service delivery. Registering with these partners and keeping them updated with changes can be a significant burden for many healthcare provider organisations.

A typical healthcare provider organisation's business partners can include:

- primary health networks
- funders (such as Medicare, private health insurers and workplace and accident insurers)
- communication services (such as secure messaging services and prescription exchanges)
- health services directories (such as the National Health Services Directory)
- private and government clinical programs
- clinical pathways services
- online booking systems
- diagnostic services
- public and private hospitals.

The challenge

In most cases, these business partners require the healthcare provider organisation to register details of the healthcare services they provide and the practitioners that provide them.

When a new practitioner joins a healthcare service (such as a practice or clinic) often 10–15 different forms, with very similar information, need to be completed to update these partners. These partners must also be notified when a practitioner leaves a healthcare service.

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The impacts

The need to manually notify 10–15 business partners whenever an organisation's service delivery details change has many impacts.
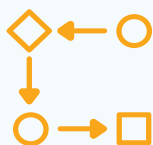
Missed updates

Time-poor staff only notify the highest-priority partners such as funders, leaving other partners (such as health services directories and hospitals) with incomplete and out-of-date information. Most partners are not advised when practitioners have left a healthcare service, resulting in referrals and reports being sent to practitioners who are no longer there.

Errors

Errors are made in the completion of forms (both paper or online) and further errors made on transcribing the information into partners' systems.

Poor usability of secure messaging

There is no way to reliably identify healthcare services, resulting in significant manual effort in the addressing of electronic messages. This is one of the most significant barriers to the success of secure messaging and will continue to hamper future efforts at healthcare system interoperability.

Barriers to new programs

New government initiatives and other programs that require information about healthcare services must ask healthcare provider organisations to fill in yet another form to register their details. Such efforts are likely to fail as there are already too many forms to be completed.

Systemic impacts

The lack of access to accurate and up-to-date information about healthcare services causes widespread and far-reaching inefficiencies, errors and waste across the healthcare system.

Streamlining registration with PCA™

PCA™ streamlines the registration of a healthcare provider organisation's service delivery details with their business partners. This significantly improves the completeness, timeliness, accuracy and availability of healthcare service information across the healthcare system.

✓ Validated master copy

Healthcare provider organisations use PCA™ to maintain a single master copy of their practices, clinics and other healthcare services including details of the service type, contact details and hours of operation. Where appropriate, they also record the practitioners involved in delivering the service. Key information is validated against the Australian Business Register, Ahpra and other professional boards, the Healthcare Identifiers Service and the Geocoded National Address File.

✓ Automatic updates

Practice management and other systems that contain service delivery information can be integrated with PCA™ to automatically update the master copy. Healthcare provider organisations can use PCA™ portal as an alternative or complementary channel for making updates and can optionally have these changes synchronised back into their local systems. A healthcare provider organisation's business partners are automatically updated whenever details are changed.
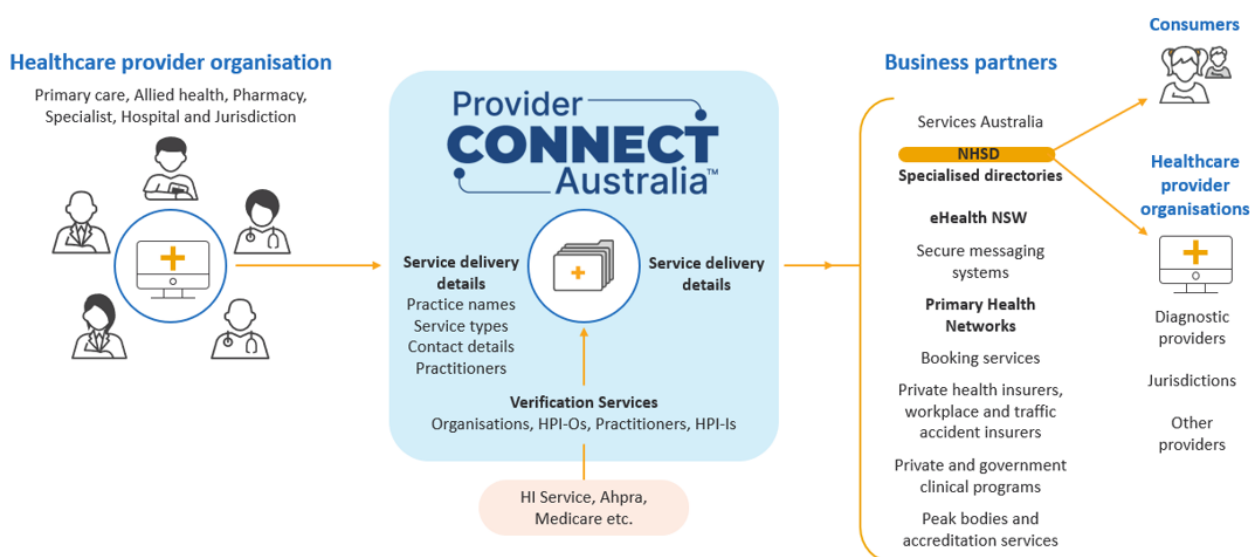
✓ Pre-filled registration forms

Business partners can build online registration forms that pre-fill with their client's PCA™ data. This greatly reduces the registration effort for healthcare provider organisations, who will only need to provide those additional details specific to that partner.

✓ Information flow through partner directories

By receiving automatic updates, partner directories will provide up-to-date recipient details to other healthcare providers wishing to find suitable services and send referrals, discharge summaries and other communications.

Provider Connect Australia – how does it work?

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Integration with the Healthcare Identifiers Service

Most individual practitioners must be registered with a professional association in order to practise in Australia. Some of these associations are boards administered by Ahpra and others are independent of Ahpra. The Healthcare Identifiers (HI) Service provides a unified view of registered practitioners from Ahpra and non-Ahpra associations and their Healthcare Provider Identifiers – Individual (HPI-Is).

The HI Service also provides reliable identification of healthcare provider organisations through an opt-in process of registering for a Healthcare Provider Identifier – Organisation (HPI-O). Organisations can register HPI-Os for different parts (subsidiaries, branches, departments) of their organisation.

While the HI Service identifies the legal entities involved in healthcare service delivery, it records few details about the services they provide. Healthcare provider organisations often need to give HPI-Is and HPI-Os to their business partners, but lack an effective way to do this.

PCA™ allows healthcare provider organisations to link the details of their service delivery with their HPI-Os and the HPI-Is of their practitioners. These are then disclosed to the organisation's business partners in a complete and up-to-date view of the organisation's healthcare service delivery.

Healthcare service identifiers

PCA™ generates a location identifier (PCA-LI) for each practice, clinic or other service delivery location along with a healthcare service identifier (PCA-HSI) for each service delivered. Each practitioner involved in delivering a service is given a practitioner role identifier (PCA-PRI) to identify each of their service delivery roles.

PCA™ provides healthcare provider organisations' business partners with a complete and up-to-date view of the:

- organisation and parts of the organisation identified by their ABN and/or HPI-O
- service delivery locations identified by their PCA-LI
- healthcare services identified by their PCA-HSI
- practitioners delivering the healthcare services identified by their HPI-I
- practitioners' service delivery roles identified by their PCA-PRI.

Integration with the National Health Services Directory (NHSD)

The NHSD has intergrated with PCA™ as a business partner and automatically receive updates from healthcare provider organisations about their healthcare services and practitioners.

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