



Media release

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Better Connected: a national conversation begins on a roadmap for a more modern, digitally connected health system

The Australian Digital Health Agency has today opened an online consultation for all Australians, including frontline clinicians, consumers, healthcare organisations and the technology sector to have their say on a more modern, digitally connected health system.

The [online consultation](#) is part of a nationwide series of discussions used to co-design the National Health Interoperability Roadmap, which will agree the standards and priorities required to achieve a more modern digitally connected health system in Australia.

The Roadmap is a key priority of the National Digital Health Strategy, which was approved by all states and territories through the Council of Australian Government (COAG) Health Council in 2017.

The National Digital Health Strategy highlights the importance of connected health services and calls for the definition of standards to support interoperability that will support clinicians, patients and citizens make the best health and care decisions.

“Industry clinical software supports millions of digital transactions daily through public and private health systems,” said Emma Hossack, Chief Executive Officer of the Medical Software Industry Association.

“A collaborative consensus on standards will increase confidence of all users and make a more interconnected health system possible for patients and their healthcare providers.”


In addition to the online consultation, the Agency will be facilitating over 50 digital health community conversations over coming months with members of the healthcare sector, health technology industry and consumer representatives to collaborate on how digital technology can best support the delivery of a person-centred healthcare system that prevents disease and empowers personal wellbeing.

Sharing the right health information at the right time is critical to high quality, sustainable health and care. Currently, many digital health systems in separate healthcare locations are unable to talk to each other. Information collected about a patient – for example in a hospital or a GP practice – often isn’t made available to others involved in a patient’s care.

“Based on my experience as a patient, having a better-connected system will ensure I can have more control over my own health information and greater access to more efficient and safer services,” said patient advocate Harry Iles-Mann.

“It means knowing that when it matters most, the management of my health and wellbeing by the system is being supported by a network of information sharing tailored to my own needs and expectations.”

In almost every part of our lives, whether it’s banking, transport, travel or maintaining social or business connections, technology has changed the way we do things. Just as people expect technology to seamlessly support them in their everyday lives, both consumers and healthcare professionals expect digital technology to support the delivery of high-quality healthcare.



Interoperability holds the potential to bring patients' records together from a range of systems and to provide access to information from disparate sources, give consumers and providers greater visibility and enable research and innovation.

For example, 20% of Australians have a confirmed allergy. Hospital admissions for anaphylaxis have increased five-fold over the past 20 years, and drug allergy induced anaphylaxis deaths have increased by 300%. In clinical situations where a patient is deteriorating and requires immediate intervention, knowing whether a drug may cause life-threatening anaphylaxis is vital.

This first consultation, hosted by Agency chief executive officer, Mr Tim Kelsey, was held on 18 March 2019 at the George Institute for Global Health in Sydney and brought together leaders from medical colleges, innovation experts, privacy advocates.

At the launch, President of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners said: "A better-connected healthcare system will allow doctors to spend less time ringing around and searching for faxes and more time talking with patients."

"Today is about ensuring the road to a better digitally connected system is a two-way conversation."

"Best use of data and technology is key to sustainable, high quality and person-centred health care," said Agency chief executive officer Tim Kelsey.

"We've made progress since the National Digital Health Strategy was launched in 2018 – including creating a My Health Record for 9 out of 10 Australians, and developing standards for secure digital messages to replace letters and fax machines in healthcare. We are now developing the plan to move Australia to the next stage of connected care.

"Improving the interoperability of health and care services so that the right information is available at the right time for the right person is fundamental to improving the outcomes and experience of healthcare."

[The online consultation survey is now available.](#)

The Agency also welcomes written submissions by email or mail.

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About the Australian Digital Health Agency

The Agency is tasked with improving health outcomes for all Australians through the delivery of digital healthcare systems, and implementing [Australia's National Digital Health Strategy](#) – *Safe, Seamless, and Secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia* in collaboration with partners across the community. The Agency is the System Operator of [My Health Record](#), and provides leadership, coordination, and delivery of a collaborative and innovative approach to utilising technology to support and enhance a clinically safe and connected national health system. These improvements will give individuals more control of their health and their health information, and support healthcare providers to deliver informed healthcare through access to current clinical and treatment information. Further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.