



MEDIA RELEASE

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EAST ARNHAM ANNOUNCED AS SITE FOR DIGITAL HEALTH COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Under a national initiative led by the Australian Digital Health Agency, East Arnhem will become a Community of Excellence for digital health.

The new program is funded through a Commonwealth Government \$750 000 commitment over two years from the Australian Digital Health Agency (Agency) and a co-contribution valued at \$240 000 over two years from NT Health, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT) and Northern Territory Primary Health Network (NT PHN).

The Communities of Excellence program aims to embed digital health capabilities in East Arnhem focused on four key initiatives: My Health Record system, secure messaging, telehealth and medicines safety.

NT Health Chief Executive, Professor Catherine Stoddart, said the digital program would address a number of key health challenges facing residents of the East Arnhem region.

“We want to improve patients’ records by having all providers using the My Health Record system, raising awareness of medications, allergies and adverse reactions to medicines,” Prof Stoddart said.

“It is also hoped to improve telehealth services and allow providers to securely share patient information so there is an integrated health care plan.

“The expansion of digital health technologies has the capacity to help prevent illness, reduce the burden of chronic disease management, promote wellbeing and support people in living healthy and productive lives,” Prof Stoddart said.

East Arnhem was selected for the program based on a number of factors including the distance and remoteness and the impact severe weather and other factors on patients’ access to health services, including those to treat and manage chronic disease.

AMSANT Chief Executive Officer, John Paterson said “This is an important program to illustrate how digital technologies can improve health and wellbeing in remote communities and the East Arnhem project will provide a model that can be implemented in other remote communities – not just in the Territory but across Australia.”

The Agency has partnered with organisations to deliver two other projects as part of the Communities of Excellence program in Emerald, Queensland and also Hedland, Western Australia.

Agency General Manager, Travis Hodgson said “Digital health technology is widely recognised as the bedrock of future healthcare innovation.”

“The benefits for patients are significant and compelling: hospital admissions avoided, fewer adverse drug events, reduced duplication of tests, better coordination of care for people with chronic and complex conditions, and better-informed treatment decisions,” he said. “Digital health can help save and improve lives.”



Steve Renouf, Indigenous spokesperson for the Agency said “The Agency digital health COE initiatives across Australia really are cutting edge in terms of the way in which they engage and empower communities to take the lead in designing and embracing digital technology, which in turn ensures cultural respect and long-term sustainability.”

The announcement of East Arnhem as a region for the Communities of Excellence program is the result of ongoing collaboration between NT Health, AMSANT and NT PHN to promote improved integration across the primary health care system.

NT PHN Chief Executive Officer, Gillian Yearsley said “This partnership is critical to improving integration across the health system in the Territory. Through this initiative we will seek to adopt technologies to build innovative models of care for those in communities, in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and other providers.”

An overarching NT Digital Health Strategy will soon be released which focuses on leveraging digital capacity and capability to deliver streamlined health services to our communities.

Further information on the Communities of Excellence program is available at:
<https://conversation.digitalhealth.gov.au/communities-of-excellence>

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