Australian Government
Australian Digital Health Agency

Media release

Secure messaging standards to be mandatory

State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments have released a joint statement in support of new standards for secure messaging, stating that the standards will be mandatory in future procurement for applicable systems.

The joint statement was shared with industry at a workshop in December 2019 which was attended by over 50 representatives from clinical and secure messaging software suppliers, governments and clinical representatives.

The Australian Digital Health Agency has been working with industry and governments over a number of years to achieve interoperable secure messaging across different systems – necessary to accelerate use of electronic messaging over fax machines and paper transmission.

The workshop launched the approach to national scaling for a consistent, standards-based approach to secure messaging across Australia, to enable healthcare providers to communicate effectively as part of the National Digital Health Strategy 2018-22.

The workshop was jointly chaired by Ms Bettina McMahon the soon to be interim CEO of the Australian Digital Health Agency, Ms Emma Hossack Chief Executive Officer, Medical Software Industry Association (MSIA) and Dr Nathan Pinskier GP and former Chair of the RACGP Expert Committee – eHealth and Practice Services.

Ms Bettina McMahon said "Many people across industry, governments and peak associations have been working with us since our first meeting in December 2016 to solve what some were describing as an intractable problem. We've had quiet confidence that we could co-produce specifications and standards with industry and professionals, try them out in early implementations, and get to a point where Australia's customers of these systems would require their use.

"We're now at that point – with Governments confirming that future procurements will reference the standards as mandatory requirements.

Once again government, the health sector and the software industry have come together to address a key priority in the National Digital Health Strategy. It is this level of cooperation and shared insights that will let us achieve the benefits of digital health."

Ms Emma Hossack said "There is work underway on a standards framework, trust framework and federated directory solution which is marvellous. We have consensus that these will be developed collaboratively and in keeping with the broader digital health interoperability approach. Whilst this can't be rushed, we are optimistic that future development will occur through agreed standards, validation and conformance which is good news for all Australians using the health system."

Dr Nathan Pinskier said "In the last three years, we have witnessed a significant level of industry collaboration and commitment in order to resolve a major deficiency in healthcare secure messaging being the lack of seamless interoperability between disparate software products. In this new decade of 2020, this collaborative program is now poised to deliver tangible benefits to both healthcare providers and their patients."

A [Communique](#) on the outcomes of the workshop was released that describes the steps that will be taken to support national scaling of standards-compliant systems.

The [Communique](#) acknowledged the work done with industry to co-develop standards which were tested and refined through proof of concept implementations, the balloting of standards where appropriate, and the provision of financial support to industry to implement these standards.

Media contact
Media Team
Mobile: 0428 772 421 Email: media@digitalhealth.gov.au

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.