



Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

## Council for Connected Care

*A better-connected healthcare system for all Australians*

### Communiqué

The fifth meeting of the Council for Connected Care (Council) was held virtually on 2 May 2024 and welcomed Anya Nikolic, CEO of the Australasian Institute of Digital Health (AIDH) as a new member of the Council. The meeting focused on two priority areas of the Interoperability Plan: Innovation and Benefits.

Members discussed the government's role in supporting and enabling innovation in the healthcare sector, how to measure the progress and outcomes of connected care, and impactful initiatives that will advance interoperability in the healthcare system.

The Department of Health and Aged Care spoke about the role of government in fostering and facilitating innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. The presentation covered the main drivers and challenges of innovation, the policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage and guide innovation alongside the current and future initiatives that aim to stimulate and accelerate innovation, including AI. Robust discussion was held on the potential safety issues, the need to uplift digital literacy and the continued importance of the relationship between care providers and patients needing to be balanced against any potential productivity gains delivered by AI and automation tools. Members noted that more research and evidence on the impact of AI deployments is important to build trust and recognition of evolving systems and user maturity.

Members examined how to assess benefits and the level and impact of connected care in the healthcare system, reviewing the current state of measurement in Australia and internationally, the challenges and gaps in data and digital maturity models, and the proposed approach and roadmap for developing a robust and comprehensive interoperability measurement framework.

Professor Wendy Chapman provided a high-level update on the progress of Standards Advisory Group (SAG), noting a significant body of work is underway across various programs related to digital health standards, national standards catalogue, procurement guidelines and Health Information Exchange (HIE). Additionally, the SAG has discussed public feedback on the first release of the Australian Core Dataset for Interoperability and keen to explore collaboration opportunities with other standards organisations.

A lively discussion was facilitated by Peter Birch from Talking HealthTech where members discussed trends and opportunities of innovation in healthcare including generative AI, cybersecurity, and remote patient monitoring. Barriers and enablers, lessons learned, and best practices for successful innovation were considered including the ethical and social implications of AI in healthcare. Key themes for members to consider included bureaucratic burden and clinician burnout, reliance on outdated technology and the opportunity to implement advanced technology, including the importance of clear and concise communication to ensure management of any potential misalignment of patient expectations. By embracing a holistic approach to innovation, members



discussed how the full spectrum of available tools and methodologies could be leveraged to drive meaningful change in healthcare delivery.

The AIDH provided an update on the Capability Action Plan (CAP), which articulates priority actions required to effectively build digital health capability across the health workforce to respond to the needs of consumers now and in the future. The CAP is a 5–7-year plan endorsed by States and Territories and, in the short-term, the AIDH in partnership with the Agency has established a program of work to progress priority initiatives such as the digital health capability framework, organisational readiness tools, and a digital health self-assessment tool. AIDH is currently developing the digital health workforce readiness framework and a digital hub which will provide curated digital health workforce content. AIDH will also continue to pilot and evaluate the Australian digital health capability framework self-assessment tools to gain insights into the readiness of the workforce, aiming to enhance the digital health skills of health and care professionals.

The third quarterly progress report was provided for noting to members. An update was provided by the Agency on the development of education materials for Connected Care modules - information sharing, identity, and standards. There is a growing demand for animated tools to provide education to both consumers and providers. A webpage is currently in development to publish these education materials. The Agency's research team also discussed the measurement and benefits of connected care and highlighted the Benefits Framework which focuses on social, economic, and health system benefits and disbenefits. There was a high-level discussion about the approach to measuring the benefits and members were provided with an in-depth presentation focusing on updates regarding identity, standards, information sharing, innovation, benefits, and policy tools.

The Council members agreed to publish past and future Council papers on the Agency's website, to promote a culture of transparency, openness, and collaboration. Members also expressed their appreciation for the presentations and agreed to continue the dialogue and collaboration on these topics.

The fifth meeting of the Council was a productive and informative session that explored the key aspects of innovation and benefits for connected care in healthcare. The Council will next meet in August 2024. The primary focus of discussion for the next meeting will be the Council for Connected Care annual review.