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INTRODUCTION

Digital health adoption and use can enable a safer, more integrated system of quality health care. Digital technology already informs and connects Australians (e.g. through social media, travel, banking, tax, postal services, education, health and government services). Digital health is becoming part of everyday health care. It aims to electronically connect the points of care and enables high quality health care information and data to be accessed and exchanged more securely, easily and quickly.

Consumers, health care professionals, organisations and systems can use digital health platforms (e.g. clinical software, internet based portals, mobile apps) and technologies (e.g. telehealth, smartphones, wearables) to more effectively and efficiently access and exchange information.

Digital health solutions can help consumers to better understand, monitor, manage and improve their own health, and work closely with their health care providers.

The health care industry is increasingly using big data analytics to derive insights from rich health care data to inform health policy development, and improve the quality and safety of health care.

The privacy concerns associated with use of big data analytics highlight the importance of promoting and supporting understanding of digital health information privacy, security standards and cybersecurity among consumers, carers and health care providers.

Nationally and regionally, digital health adoption and use varies among health care consumers, professionals, organisations and systems. Under Australia’s National Digital Health Strategy – safe, seamless and secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia (2017) work is ongoing to improve secure messaging, interoperability, data quality, medications safety, enhanced models of care, workforce and education, technological innovation and leadership.

Adoption and confident use of the My Health Record (MyHR) system will deliver knowledge and skills that are transferable to other digital health technologies.
This strategy and roadmap

Brisbane South PHN developed this *Primary Health care Digital Health Strategy and Roadmap 2018 – 2021, Brisbane south region* (Digital Health Strategy and Roadmap) to identify shared digital health priorities and guide action to support adoption and use of digital health technologies in primary health care that will contribute to improving health and wellbeing in the Brisbane south region.

The Digital Health Strategy and Roadmap has been developed drawing on research about the clinical and economic benefits of digital health. It also incorporates the results of consultations with stakeholders – consumers, carers, health care professionals and organisations and health specialists – about the current situation, barriers to adoption and use, and ways to build digital health capability in the region.

The Digital Health Strategy and Roadmap is designed to build on significant existing digital health capabilities within the region, and to improve knowledge, connection, collaboration and informed choices for health care consumers and carers, practitioners and organisations, and the system, focusing on:

- improving overall digital health literacy
- increasing digital health adoption and more uniform usage
- increasing digital health enabled exchange of clinical information between patients and their health care professionals
- improving consumer, carer and health care professional access to health and health service information.

The Digital Health Strategy and Roadmap comprises two key components:

1. The Primary Health Care Strategic Framework presents the Vision, Purpose, Goals and Strategies
2. The Roadmap presents the range of actions that the PHN and others will work on together to achieve the primary health care digital health goals over three years from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021.

This *Primary Health care Digital Health Strategy and Roadmap 2018 – 2021, Brisbane south region* will be a living document, updated every three years to reflect changes to priorities, progress and technology trends.
OVERVIEW OF THE DIGITAL HEALTH STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In Australia and globally, digital health technologies are transforming the health system. Digital health technologies are being designed to connect health care, and improve the safety, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of health service delivery across the hospital, specialist and primary health sectors.

Adoption and use of digital health technologies changes the way health care is delivered and experienced. For example, secure and timely access to high quality patient information and data can minimise the need for patients to re-tell their health story and maximise access to critical diagnostic and medication history in an emergency.

National

Digital health technologies are currently used at varying levels of capability. Australian governments are investing to “evolve digital health capability through innovation, collaboration and leadership to facilitate digital health integration in the health system” (ADHA 2017).


The National Strategy was developed in consultation with the community (Australian governments, patients, carers, clinicians, industry and science leaders). It presents comprehensive analyses of the evidence for what works in digital health, and the benefits of digital health adoption and use for consumers, providers and the system, including:

- better informed treatment decisions
- better availability and access to health care
- better coordination of care for people with chronic and complex conditions
- reduced duplication of tests
- fewer adverse drug events (ADHA 2017).

All states and territories have prioritised digital health as key to improving service delivery and health outcomes, as have many health care providers and organisations. Entrepreneurs and developers are investing in new interoperable tools and new ways to use data and provide health services (ADHA 2017).

The national strategic priorities focus on factors affecting capability, and adoption and use of digital health technologies and standards to improve interoperability, including:

- strong privacy, security and risk management frameworks to protect sensitive information while enabling the safe and efficient sharing of information (e.g. the Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010, the My Health Record Act 2012, Health Legislation Amendment (eHealth) Act 2015)
- consumer understanding of digital health benefits and their privacy rights in order to make informed choices about how their health information is used (e.g. My Health Record consumer information resources)
- health care professional understanding of how to use digital health tools in a way that safely handles personal information (e.g. health care provider information, education and training resources)
- Secure Message Delivery Program (ADHA) specifications supporting secure delivery of messages containing clinical documents and/or other information to support continuity of care between health care providers and patients
- commitment, cooperation and collaboration to promote and support changes to:
  - interactions between consumers and health care providers
  - clinical and business practices
  - policy, legislation and funding.
These national strategic priorities are shared and supported by health care and ICT industry leadership, and will stimulate cross sectors partnership and efforts on development and implementation of innovative models of care.

State

The Queensland Government has been at the forefront of digital health adoption. Since 2015, eHealth Queensland has been working collaboratively to implement the eHealth Investment Strategy a plan for investing in technologies to connect health care, support better health care delivery, promote the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, and innovation.

Queensland was the first of the Australian states and territories to have all public hospitals connected to the My Health Record system. Queensland Health is implementing the:
- Health Provider Portal – ‘The Viewer’ providing secure access to hospital based patient information by registered General Practitioners
- Digital Hospital Program, including the Integrated Electronic Medical Record (ieMR) initiative, in public hospitals statewide
- Integrated Referral Management Solution (iRMS) providing General Practitioners and other referrers with rapid real-time access to referral information at any point in the referral pathway.

Together, Queensland Health (through the Digital Hospital Program) and the Australian Digital Health Agency are making pathology and diagnostic imaging results and discharge summaries from public hospitals available through the My Health Record system.

This will enable key information about a patient’s experience in public hospitals to be viewed through conformant software in general practice, to support more coordinated and informed health care.
Brisbane South PHN region

The Brisbane South PHN region covers a large area south of the Brisbane River. It spans four local government areas including Logan and Redland (100% coverage), Brisbane (approximately 54% coverage), and Scenic Rim (approximately 34% coverage). Approximately 1.1 million people live in this culturally and socioeconomically diverse area which is predominantly a metropolitan region with pockets of rural (Beaudesert) and remote (Bay Islands) locations.

Generally, digital health maturity in the Brisbane south region is quite high, with many of the region’s hospitals now using integrated electronic medical records.

General practices in the region are also highly computerised, with most practices using clinical information systems; registering, contributing to and using My Health Record records; many using clinical auditing tools to analyse their patient data to improve quality and safety; and increasingly using technologies such as secure messaging, SMS reminders for patients and online booking systems. This environment creates a good opportunity from which to build digital health capacity and capability.

Hospital and specialist health care

The Brisbane South PHN region contains eight public and eight private hospitals across 13 locations. Metro South Health is the major provider of public health services, health education and research in the region. Children’s Health Queensland is a specialist statewide hospital and health service that provides health care for children and young people. It includes the Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital located in the Brisbane south region. Mater Health Services comprises several hospitals, health centres, a medical research institute, and pathology and pharmacy businesses located in the region.

Children’s Health Queensland and Metro South Health are implementing the Digital Hospitals Program. In 2015, the Princess Alexandra Hospital was the first large-scale digital hospital in Australia. Since then, five public hospitals in the region have commenced implementation of the Digital Hospitals Program, including Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital, Logan Hospital, Beaudesert Hospital, QEII Jubilee Hospital and Redland Hospital. These hospitals are set to become digital hospitals with advanced capability by 2020.

Metro South Health has developed a Central Referral Hub to process all referrals to Metro South Health specialist outpatient departments at the five public hospitals in the region. An increasing number of referrals are sent electronically via secure messaging.

SpotOnHealth HealthPathways is an initiative of Metro South Health and Brisbane South PHN, in partnership with Mater Health Services and Children’s Health Queensland. It provides web-based information outlining the assessment, management and referral of over 550 conditions, for use at the point of care by General Practitioners, specialists, nurses, allied health professionals and other health care professionals.

The Mater Health digital health strategy and roadmap aim to provide seamless access to information through an integrated electronic medical record system, the Doctors Portal, online access to learning through web-based portals and
apps, an improved e-referral process (supported by web-based Smart Referral forms) for antenatal, general medicine and surgery referrals to outpatient departments, and a data analysis platform.

Primary health care

The region has a strong primary health care sector. There are 333 general practices, eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services, 12 public Community Health Centres and 188 aged care service locations 90 of which provide residential aged care.

The primary care workforce includes:
- 1,360 General Practitioners
- 1,671 nurses and midwives
- 824 community-based pharmacists
- 2,612 community-based allied health professionals
- 902 dental practitioners.

(Sources: AIHW 2016-2017; Brisbane South PHN Strategic Plan 2018; Brisbane South PHN Needs Assessment 2018)

Whilst digital health capability among general practices is generally high. In February 2018, 287 (86%) general practices were registered for the My Health Record system. Over 50% of general practices were participating in Brisbane South PHN’s Building Digital Health Program which uses data analysis to help improve data quality and patient care.

Other primary health care providers (e.g. allied health) have lower digital health technology adoption and usage.

Brisbane South PHN

Brisbane South PHN provides considerable digital health technology support to general practices, community pharmacists, and allied health practices. This includes support to general practices to collect quality clinical data and analyse and use it as they plan, implement and monitor clinical and business system initiatives.

The PHN also provides resources to general practices; education, training and events; and tailored practice support to all primary health care organisations to build digital health capability in the Brisbane South PHN region. These include how-to-guides and links to websites:
- the My Health Record system
- the eHealth Practice Incentive Program (ePIP)
- secure messaging
- eHealth Queensland Health Provider Portal– ‘The Viewer’
- electronic prescriptions
- referral templates
- Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) and access to it via Provider Digital Access (PRODA).

Brisbane South PHN also collaborates with health care partners (e.g. eHealth Queensland, Metro South Health, Children’s Health Queensland, Mater Health Services) and others to promote, support and develop digital health solutions and system changes such as, the Integrated Referral Management Solution (iRMS), the My Health Record system and the Secure Message Delivery (SMD) Program.
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE DIGITAL HEALTH STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
Our vision

**BETTER SYSTEM, BETTER HEALTH – SUPPORTED BY DIGITAL HEALTH**

Our purpose

To identify shared digital health priorities, and guide action to support adoption and use of digital health technologies in primary health care that will contribute to improving health and wellbeing in the Brisbane South PHN region.

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Strategies. What we will do ...

1.1 Improve the digital health literacy of health care consumers.
   1.1.1 Promote the benefits of digital health applications for consumers, with a particular focus on the My Health Record system.
   1.1.2 Inform and build consumer awareness of digital health privacy, consent and security settings in the My Health Record system.
   1.1.3 Empower consumers to use digital health technologies to support and maintain their health and wellbeing.

1.2 Improve the digital health literacy of primary health care providers.
   1.2.1 Enhance primary health care provider knowledge of the range of digital health technologies that offer improved business efficiencies and enable timely, quality health care delivery.
   1.2.2 Promote the benefits of digital health applications for primary health care providers, with a particular focus on the My Health Record system.
   1.2.3 Inform and build primary health care provider awareness of digital health privacy, consent and security settings and the legislative framework underpinning the My Health Record system.
   1.2.4 Raise awareness and use of clinical decision support and data analytic tools.
   1.2.5 Support primary health care providers to ensure the safe use of digital health technologies, and maintain information security and privacy.

1.3 Support and enhance primary care sector use of data to improve patient care and the health system.
   1.3.1 Promote and support primary health care providers to increase their use of interoperable structured data and consistent terminology in health care applications to enhance data quality and analysis that enables decision support, proactive planning and quality improvement.
   1.3.2 Interpret and present analyses from primary health care and other data sources to inform regional decision-making and target interventions to improve health.
   1.3.3 Benchmark primary health care data to drive quality improvement strategies.
   1.3.4 Explore opportunities to use real time data to inform and alert health care professionals and consumers about emerging or significant population health issues.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

We will be successful when ...

- Consumers in the Brisbane South PHN region are engaged in My Health Record awareness campaigns
- General Practice, Community Pharmacy, Private Specialist, and Allied Health are engaged in My Health Record awareness and education
- Primary health care providers are aware of the benefits of digital health applications, data analytic tools and clinical decision support in the Brisbane South PHN region
- The primary health care sector is supported to use data to improve patient care and health system
Strategies. What we will do ...

2.1 Promote and support secure and effective communication and information sharing between consumers and their health care professionals.

2.1.1 Promote the use of the My Health Record system, secure messaging, telehealth and electronic care plans.

2.1.2 Promote and support adoption of digital health information privacy, security standards and cybersecurity processes among consumers and health care providers.

2.2 Improve the exchange of quality health information across health care sectors as a means of improving health system efficiencies and coordination of the patient’s journey in the health system.

2.2.1 Promote and support adoption and use of agreed standards and terminologies in health care applications to enable better clinical decision support systems and business efficiencies (i.e. improving the sending and receiving process, less clinician and administrator data rekeying and fewer transcription errors) to ensure the quality and safety of patient care.

2.2.2 Promote awareness and use of external clinical data sources (e.g. the My Health Record system and the Health Provider Portal ‘The Viewer’) to improve timely, secure health care provider access to vital health information.

2.2.3 Continue to develop and promote ‘SpotOnHealth HealthPathways’ as a tool to communicate local specialist and General Practitioner agreements about clinical processes for assessment, management and referral of patients presenting with common conditions.

2.2.4 Support primary health care professionals to adopt technologies (e.g. secure messaging) that increase the timely, efficient, intelligent and secure sharing of health care information.

2.2.5 Facilitate better engagement between primary health care practices and technology vendors.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

We will be successful when ...

- Primary health care providers in the Brisbane South PHN region are aware of and use digital health technologies and associated privacy and security standards

- Primary health care providers use digital health technologies to improve quality information exchange across health care sectors, improving coordination of care
Strategies. What we will do …

3.1 Promote and support the use of digital health technologies that enable individuals to collaborate and work with their provider/s as a partner in their own health and health care.

3.1.1 Promote examples of how individuals are using technologies such as mobile applications and wearable devices to monitor their health and share information with their health care provider to support informed joint decision-making.

3.2 Support health care providers to develop and share digital health enabled innovative models of collaborative care, particularly for those most vulnerable in the community and patients with chronic and complex care needs.

3.2.1 Explore and support new digital health enabled models of care.

3.2.2 Disseminate examples and results of innovative uses of digital health technologies in primary care settings.

3.3 Improve understanding of digital health capability of primary health care professionals and organisations, and identify challenges, gaps and ways to overcome them.

3.3.1 Work in collaboration with the multi-professional Digital Health Reference Group to inform Brisbane South PHN about digital health capability issues of concern, and adoption of digital health technologies.

3.3.2 Work in collaboration with other PHNs, stakeholders in other health sectors and government to develop solutions to current barriers to the adoption of digital health technologies.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

We will be successful when …

- Primary health care providers are aware of, and feel empowered to support their consumers/patients to use emerging digital health technologies, such as mobile applications and wearable devices to manage their health.

- There is an improved understanding of the digital health capability of the primary health care sector, which includes the identification of opportunities to improve health care for the most vulnerable in the community.
Strategies. What we will do ...

4.1 Improve consumer and provider access to health and health care service information.
   4.1.1 Host links to government online evidence based health information sources and services, including Online medical help, (Queensland Government), Head to Health (Australian Government), Better Health Channel (Victorian Government).
   4.1.2 Host links to the National Health Services Directory.
   4.1.3 Support the creation, adoption and use of the Queensland Integrated Referral Management Solution.

4.2 Facilitate innovative use of digital technologies to support better access to care closer to home.
   4.2.1 Support providers and consumers to adopt and use digital health technologies (e.g. secure messaging, e-appointment systems, smart referrals, reminder systems, telehealth, electronic shared care planning, coordination and collaboration tools).

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

We will be successful when ...

- Consumers and providers have improved access to health and health care service information
- Consumers and providers are more aware of and supported in their use of digital technologies that bring care closer to home
The strategies support stakeholders to work together to achieve the primary health care digital health Strategies for the Brisbane South PHN region over three years from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021. Initially the focus is on digital health literacy and adoption, and then on maintaining and enhancing it. The shading decreases in intensity to represent the change in emphasis over time as capability is enhanced.
3.1 Promote digital health technologies that enable individuals and their health care providers

3.2 Support, promote and share digital health enabled health care models

3.3 Improve understanding of primary health care provider digital health capabilities in the region challenges, gaps and ways to overcome them

4.1 Improve consumer and provider access to service and health information

4.2 Facilitate innovative use of digital technologies to support access to care closer to home

BETTER COLLABORATION

3.1.1 Promote examples of digital health technologies use to support self management and joint decision-making
3.2.1 Work in collaboration with partners to develop, promote and support digital health systems and innovation
3.2.2 Explore and support new digital health enabled models
3.2.3 Support clinical community to develop digital health enabled models
3.2.4 Disseminate examples and collaborate with strategic partners on innovative use of digital health technology

3.3.1 Work in collaboration with the Digital Health Reference Group to better understand regional digital health capacity
3.3.2 Work in collaboration with stakeholders to develop solutions to current barriers to digital health adoption

BETTER ACCESS AND CHOICES

4.1.1 Host links to government online health information sources and services
4.1.2 Host links to the National Health Services Directory
4.1.3 Support creation, adoption, use of the Queensland iRMS

4.2.1 Support providers and consumers to adopt technologies to support better access to care
**Glossary**

**Better Health Channel, Victorian State Government**
The Better Health Channel provides evidence based health and medical information to help people understand and manage their health and medical conditions. The information on the site is quality assured by government as reliable, up-to-date, locally relevant and easy to understand.  

**Central Referral Hub - Metro South Health**
The Metro South Health Central Referral Hub processes all referrals to Metro South Health specialist outpatient departments at:  
- Princess Alexandra Hospital  
- QEII Jubilee Hospital  
- Logan Hospital  
- Redland Hospital  
- Beaudesert Hospital  

**Head to Health**
The Australian Department of Health Head to Health digital mental health portal connects people seeking help and support and those wishing to learn more about how to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. They are linked to trusted online and phone mental health services appropriate for their individual needs. It is a directory of federally funded mental health services and resources, including mental health websites, online courses, free or low cost evidence based apps and online programs to help build personal skills, forums to share experiences with others who are also experiencing mental health challenges.  

**Health and wellbeing – online medical help, Queensland State Government**
The Health and Wellbeing tab on the Queensland Government website provides links to evidence based health and medical information to help people understand and manage their health and medical conditions. The information on the site is quality assured by government.  

**Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) and Provider Digital Access (PRODA)**
Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) is an Australian Government Department of Human Services web-based service that streamlines Medicare related interactions with the Department of Human Services for health professionals such as General Practitioners, specialists, allied health professionals, nurses, practice managers and practice staff.  

Provider Digital Access (PRODA) is a digital, portable authentication system used to securely access government online services including HPOS, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Disability Medical Assessment Online Service.  
https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/proda#group-128

**Health Provider Portal (HPP) – ‘The Viewer’**
Since July 2017, Queensland Health’s HPP – ‘The Viewer’ has provided Queensland General Practitioners secure online access to patient health care information from Queensland’s public hospitals, for the purpose of providing care or treatment to a patient. It is designed to help ensure patients receive consistent, timely and better coordinated care. Information may include blood test results, medical imaging results, details of medications received and prescribed, diagnostic details. GPs are required to register to access patient information via the HPP. Patients can opt out if they prefer that their treating GP not have online access to their health care information via the HPP.  

**Integrated electronic Medical Record (ieMR)**
Queensland Health is implementing a digital hospital system or ieMR. It allows doctors, nurses and health care teams to document and access their patient’s medical information electronically instead of using paper files. It integrates with a number of clinical systems, including pathology (AUSLAB), biomedical devices, the pharmacy information system (i-Pharmacy), the state Patient Administration System (PAS – HBICS).  

**Integrated Referral Management Solution (iRMS)**
Queensland Health is developing the iRMS program providing GPs and other referrers with rapid, real-time access to referral information at any point in the referral pathway. It is under development with Children’s Health Queensland, Metro North Health, Metro South Health and Sunshine Coast Health and is working toward statewide implementation. Features include:  
- a statewide Referral Service Directory providing details of all HHS clinical locations  
- external eReferral allowing external health providers such as GPs to create and submit a referral from either their existing practice software or from health pathways  
- internal eReferral allowing Queensland Health clinicians to create and submit a referral for existing patients  
- a statewide service allowing lodgement and tracking of both external and internal referrals.  

**Mater Doctor Portal (MDP)**
The MDP provides a secure electronic mechanism for patient information sharing between Mater and affiliated external health care providers. It provides a single point of access to Mater’s electronic patient information.  

**Mater Patient Portal**
The Mater Patient Portal is a secure online service hosted by Mater to provide patients with Mater Health information. At this stage, only pregnant women booked in to the Mater Mother’s Hospital or the Mater Mothers’ Private Brisbane are able to apply for access to their Mater Shared Electronic Health Record.  
My Health Record (MyHR) system
The My Health Record system is an online summary of an individual’s health information that can be shared securely between a patient and authorised health care providers involved in their care, at any time and anywhere. Individuals control what goes into their My Health Record, and who can access it. The My Health Record website can be used to view patient information. Providers must have compliant software that allows them to upload their patient’s information. By the end of 2018 every Australian will have a My Health Record unless they choose not to have one.

National Health Services Directory (NHSD)
The NHSD is developed and delivered by healthdirect on behalf of all Australian governments. Anyone can use it to search for health and related services, including hospitals, pharmacies, General Practitioners, emergency departments and local health facilities. Service providers can register to add their details to the NHSD.
https://about.healthdirect.gov.au/nhsd

Secure messaging
Secure messaging supports clinical workflow by allowing patient information to be shared electronically between health care providers.
Secure Message Delivery (SMD) is a set of specifications developed by the digital health community including the ADHA. The SMD specifications support secure delivery of messages containing clinical documents to support continuity of care between health care providers and patients.

Smart Referrals Workflow Solution (eRefer) (Children’s Health Queensland)
Smart Referrals Workflow Solution (eRefer) is an electronic referral management system that lodges and stores all referrals. It allows referrals to be electronically delivered to the relevant service, categorised and uploaded into the integrated electronic medical record.

SpotOnHealth HealthPathways
SpotOnHealth HealthPathways provides clinicians in the greater Brisbane south catchment with web-based information outlining the assessment, management and referral of over 550 conditions. An initiative of Metro South Health and Brisbane South PHN, in partnership with Mater Health Services and Children’s Health Queensland, it can be used at point of care primarily by GPs and is also available to specialists, nurses, allied health and other health professionals.

References


