



Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Health Practice  
Chinese Medicine  
Chiropractic  
Dental  
Medical  
Medical Radiation Practice  
Nursing and Midwifery  
Occupational Therapy  
Optometry  
Osteopathy  
Pharmacy  
Physiotherapy  
Podiatry  
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

7 February 2017

Mr Tim Kelsey  
CEO  
National Digital Health Strategy Consultation  
National Digital Health Agency  
c/ [yoursay@digitalhealth.gov.au](mailto:yoursay@digitalhealth.gov.au)

Dear Mr Kelsey

### **Submission on National Digital Health Strategy consultation**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation on the development of a National Digital Health Strategy. Our submission provides some brief background on the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), comments on aspects of the consultation Discussion Paper and survey and identifies some areas of common interest, such as a focus on digital innovation, and synergies with our work.

### **Background to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme**

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) commenced operation on 1 July 2010. The National Scheme is an outcome of the Council of Australian Government's reform program. It created a national registration and accreditation scheme for health practitioners through legislation passed in each state and territory, which established the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and 14 National Boards.

AHPRA is the national organisation responsible for implementing the National Scheme across Australia, in partnership with the 14 National Boards:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia
- Chinese Medicine Board of Australia
- Chiropractic Board of Australia
- Dental Board of Australia
- Medical Board of Australia
- Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
- Occupational Therapy Board of Australia
- Optometry Board of Australia
- Osteopathy Board of Australia
- Pharmacy Board of Australia
- Physiotherapy Board of Australia
- Podiatry Board of Australia
- Psychology Board of Australia

The National Scheme aims to protect the public by ensuring that only suitably trained and qualified practitioners are registered. It also facilitates workforce mobility across Australia; the provision of high-quality education and training of health practitioners; and rigorous assessment of overseas-trained practitioners. Guided by a nationally consistent law, AHPRA and the National Boards work to regulate the

health professions in the public interest. This includes registering practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to provide safe healthcare, and investigating concerns about registered health practitioners. As at 30 June 2016, the National Scheme regulated 657,621 registered health practitioners.

### **Comments on the National Digital Health Strategy consultation**

We note the potential for the Strategy to contribute to the safety and quality of health and to empower and inform consumers, as highlighted by the Australian Safety and Quality Commission on Health Care. AHPRA supports these goals, although our particular interest in the Strategy relates to its impact on registered health practitioners.

We support the Discussion Paper's emphasis on improving the quality of care and helping practitioners to make the best use of data and technology. We agree that in developing a Strategy, it is important to understand how health practitioners, as customers and end users, want technology designed and that design and testing must involve practitioners. In developing the Strategy, we also recognise the importance of understanding practitioner capacity to purchase, implement, and be trained in the range of technology available to support their needs, as the Discussion Paper proposes.

We agree with the Discussion Paper's points that in developing the Strategy, it will be important to consider:

- practical issues in implementing technology
- confidentiality
- systems which can be readily integrated with existing technology, to reduce cost burdens and improve uptake

In addition, a Digital Health Strategy could contribute to reducing risk through improved access to patient histories.

AHPRA is working on a range of digital transformation initiatives to support the National Scheme's regulatory functions. We are very interested in issues relating to identity management and best use of data, including innovative approaches that reduce duplication while effectively protecting privacy and confidentiality. We would be keen to discuss our work and opportunities for synergies and interfaces with the Strategy and any other work your Agency is undertaking that may be relevant to the National Scheme.

We note that this is the first stage of the development of the Strategy and look forward to participating in the future work on the Strategy, including commenting on the draft Strategy when it is available.

If you wish to discuss this matter, please contact Chris Robertson, Executive Director Strategy and Policy Directorate on 03 8708 9037.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



**Martin Fletcher**  
Chief Executive Officer