



Australian Digital Health Agency  
Head Office  
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## ***National Digital Health Strategy consultation submission***

### **About GS1 Australia**

GS1 is a not-for-profit, user-driven, standards development organisation with a 35 year history in Australia. GS1 global standards are used by over 2 million organisations, in over 110 countries, and across 20 industry sectors. GS1 global standards are ISO compliant, royalty free and all GS1 services are provided on a cost recovery basis.

We work closely with healthcare industry stakeholders to develop and support the development and adoption of global standards. Our approach aims for continuous improvement, in order to meet the growing needs of our health services now and into the future. Collaboration with local and global stakeholder communities has enabled us to develop and implement a robust system of voluntary standards which empower the unique identification, accurate capture and automatic sharing of standardised information about products, locations, people, assets and events.

Our work to support the industry and our member organisations extends also to close cooperation with other healthcare and global standards organisations such as ISO, IHTSDO (Snomed), ICCBBA (ISBT), HL7 and others within the Joint Initiative Council. The purpose of this collaborative effort is to ensure that all of the standards provided by each other's systems complement each other and together provide the much needed framework for interoperable systems and processes. The use of global standards like GS1 in healthcare assists in increasing patient safety, helps drive supply chain efficiencies, provides foundations to improve the traceability of medicines and medical devices, whilst also supporting clinical processes.

GS1 Australia has long been a partner to the Australian Healthcare industry through our ongoing work with individual organisations, associations, government authorities and industry groups who have all been looking to achieve improvements to processes related to supply chain or to leverage standards to enhance patient safety. In addition to these partnerships, we have been charged with providing three specific whole-of-industry solutions including the National Product Catalogue (provided to industry since 2006), Locatenet and Recall Health.

## **Submission**

The past 10 years have seen a steady increase in the collaboration within and between organisations across the healthcare sector to more effectively address the challenges within the health system. This increased collaboration has seen some positive industry outcomes by ensuring common issues are identified and harmonious solutions developed.

The formation of the National e-Health Transition Authority facilitated much of the coordination across key health services in the development of a shared national strategy and implementation plan that would deliver improved patient experience and a more intelligent and sustainable healthcare system.

From the outset, the need for unique identification, data standards, process automation and data capture have all been amongst the foundations recognised by industry and government as key to this national plan.

The developments of whole-of-industry solutions to enable change were also identified, resulting in the development of solutions such as the National Product Catalogue, Locatenet and Recall Health. These solutions help to facilitate sharing of standardised product master data from manufacturer to health provider systems; support automation of transactions related to procure-to-pay processes; enable sharing of health location information to support end-to-end traceability across all processes; and digitise the recall process to enable greater visibility and safety. The foundation across all these whole-of-industry solutions has been GS1 global standards, including the use of Global Trade Item Numbers (GTIN) for product identification and the use of Global Location Numbers (GLN) for location identification.

## **Areas for consideration in the future:**

### ***Cross sector strategic engagement and coordination***

Although the uptake and support for GS1 standards and the whole-of-industry solutions have continued to grow over the past decade, universal industry implementation has not occurred. This has been mainly due to an inability to translate senior level decisions on these standards and solutions into fully committed implementation and operational use. The result has been a lack of benefit realisation across the sector.

Other markets have become more mature in their understanding of the benefits of standards and have realised the strong linkages between accurate supply chain processes and clinical outcomes this has not been the case at home. In Australia, there continues to be segregation between supply chain processes and clinical processes, and little focus is paid to the former by those responsible for clinical outcomes. This could have been a result of 'Supply Chain' reform being driven from a separate 'Supply Chain Program' within NEHTA in the past, where there has been limited engagement with a broader clinical group after initial launch.

Within healthcare GS1 standards have a much broader application than the traditionally understood 'supply chain processes' given the importance (and flow on effects) of knowing what products have been used with what patients, in what procedures, in what place and time, and by what clinician in addition to the criticality of ensuring right product, right place, at right time.

Successful implementation of the standards needed to support our digitisation requires ongoing active engagement with cross industry senior healthcare leaders to facilitate the

development of an end-to-end program that delivers benefits across the chain, from healthcare supplier, right through to the clinician and patient.

In order to facilitate the necessary changes and achieve the potential benefits there is a need for a coordinated, whole of industry approach that ensures changes are linked to benefits to the consumer, clinicians, health services and their stakeholder communities.

***Clear standards framework supported by regulation, guidelines and timelines that is linked to desired outcomes***

The need for an unambiguous, global standards based approach to unique identification, data standards, process automation and data capture remains clear to all key stakeholders in industry, however sadly Australia remains immature in terms of broad implementation and suffers from a lack of supporting technology across much of the healthcare system.

One of the best examples of this proving successful has been within the UK where GS1 standards were initially seen as enablers of the NHS eProcurement strategy, however through the work of developing their demonstrator site program which required greater cross functional engagement, this transitioned into 'Scan4Safety' which reflects more closely the real benefit of implementing these standards within healthcare. For the NHS, this change of focus reflected in the branding, in conjunction with clearly articulated requirements and implementation timelines has resulted in realisation of benefits across procurement, supply chain, clinical, administrative and financial areas within health services.

GS1 global standards are used increasingly around the world as part of key market regulations and national programs in order to support safer, more efficient healthcare. Without an industry wide agreement or rule led by a recognised authority, the adoption of these foundations needed within Australia will continue to be slow paced and fragmented undermining the potential of digital health and technology implementation. The results currently being achieved in the United Kingdom under the Scan4Safety program are proof that clarity of requirements driven by a governing authority can provide substantial benefits to the system as a whole.

The view of our members in Australia is that in order to provide the improvements to quality and safety we desire and build a foundation for an interoperable, financially sustainable healthcare future then we must ensure we develop a strong framework of standards that align with the emerging adoption of unique identification requirements based on global standards. This would augment the existing local requirements from the National Blood Authority and the newly released TG091 for Medicine Labelling which include requirements for GTIN and physical marking of products.

***Enable positive patient identification to support scanning at point of care***

As one of the key enablers of 'scanning at point of care' requires the capture of patient identification to provide positive patient identification, we would like to encourage the review of how the Individual Health Identifier (IHI) could be encoded into the Global Service Relationship Number in order to provide this key pillar to our digital health capability. This standard is in use in several other countries for this purpose and has been recognised within ISO Technical Specification 18530, a standard that also provides recognised good practice for various use cases including blood transfusion, medication administration at bedside and pathology sample collection.

## Summary:

GS1 Australia is fully committed in our continued support of all of our members from across the healthcare sector which includes the Australian Digital Health Agency. The ongoing strategic relationship with the Agency is pivotal to ensure that there is leadership and whole of industry consistency with regard to the implementation of standards and solutions.

We will continue to work with all industry stakeholders to develop relevant standards and our commitment to supporting industry implementation of these standards and the industry solutions we provide is unwavering.

We hope that the forthcoming National Digital Health Strategy recognises the need for coordination at a national level in order for industry to feel confident to act and implement so the full benefits of these initiatives can be realised.

## Additional reference documents:

In support of our recommendations within this submission, we also provide the following documents for review.

- [Safer, more efficient care starts with a simple scan – Perspectives from Executive Leaders](#)
- [The Value of Trusted Product Data](#)
- [Enabling precise patient identification](#)
- [Global Healthcare Reference Book – 2016/2017](#)
- [Automatic Identification and Data Capture \(AIDC\) Healthcare Implementation Guide](#)
- [10 step guide for healthcare providers to implement GS1 standards](#)
- [Strength in Unity – the promise of global standards in healthcare, McKinsey](#)
- [Position Paper on identification of primary package level of medicines](#)
- [ISO Technical Specification 18530- Automatic Identification and data capture marking and labelling – Subject of Care and Individual Provider Identification](#)
- [Visibility: The New Value Proposition for Health Systems, World Health Innovation Network](#)
- [UK NHS Scan4Safety – Patient. Product. Place. Process.](#)

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