



23 June 2016

Dr Louise Schaper  
Chief Executive Officer  
Health Informatics Society of Australia  
1A/21 Vale Street  
North Melbourne Victoria 3051

Dear Dr Schaper

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 June 2016 on behalf of the Health Informatics Society of Australia seeking Labor's position on digital health issues. Please find our responses to your questions below.

**1. When public funds are used to pay for healthcare, do you support a policy shift from payment for services to payment for outcomes?**

Labor has announced a plan to trial new models of primary care. A Shorten Labor Government will task a newly established Centre for Medicare and Healthcare System Innovation with developing specific models of innovative primary care. This will include the development of a unique Australian model of patient-centred medical homes – Your Family Doctor. Labor will invest \$100 million over two years to establish launch sites in an appropriate mix of metropolitan, regional and rural areas, so that the models developed meet the needs of all Australians.

New ways of delivering services and a change in focus from volume to value require new financing mechanisms. Internationally the trend is for general practices to be funded via a combination of fee for service payments and/or capitation payments based on patient enrolment, which reward general practitioners and other members of the primary care team for working with patients and carers to help them manage their chronic and complex conditions.

The fee-for-service model on which Medicare for primary care is based has served Australia well for more than 30 years and will always play an important part in our health system.

The fee-for-service model does not always value the role general practitioners and other primary care providers play beyond face-to-face consultations. There are many examples across a lifetime of care of a patient, such as following up on referrals; case conferencing and management; post hospital admission care; wound care for older patients; following up on specialist appointments; liaising with other care providers; and provision of primary care for residential nursing home residents – just to name a few.

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Medicare must continue to evolve to address these issues.

## **2. Do you support regulations to incentivise interoperability of health information systems to promote exchange of clinical data; and to sanction non-compliance (within the bounds of the Privacy Act)?**

Labor will continue the development, uptake and use of eHealth records. A properly integrated eHealth record is vital for better coordination of health care and improved efficiency in the system.

A Shorten Labor Government will pursue a new, national reform agenda – National Information Policy – to be pursued through a cross-sector Independent Data Council.

The Independent Data Council would be modelled on New Zealand's Data Futures Partnership and the United Kingdom's Open Data Institute and would include experts from government, academia and the private sector. It would be tasked with promoting an optimal open data culture in Australia, supported by appropriate rules and institutions.

A National Information Policy would follow the model of the Keating government's National Competition Policy and systematically scan institutions (public, private and community), policies and regulations to identify obstacles to optimal data generation, protection, access and use.

The National Information Policy reform agenda will cover multiple fronts, over an extended period of time, while also delivering short term dividends to maintain momentum for reform. It could potentially pursue issues like:

- A comprehensive audit of existing government data sets.
- Access to government data for public good research.
- A review of existing public sector data generation policies (eg 'Smart Infrastructure' telemetry standards for public infrastructure).
- A detailed review of the impact of existing laws on data utility.
- Data generation mandates (such as Building Information Models).
- Internet of Things standardisation and certification.
- Personal Information Management Systems (PIMS).

A Shorten Labor Government will also establish a National Centre for Data Analytics which would act as a central source of data-analysis expertise for the federal government, providing expert support to its departments and agencies. The centre would sit within Digital Transformation Office.

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### **3. Do you support steps to forecast Australian digital health workforce needs and capabilities, providing educational bodies with better information for planning and offering courses that align with sector needs?**

Labor will develop a far reaching blueprint required to tackle the serious skills deficits holding back the sector and preventing us from extracting the great economic advantage that comes from embracing innovation.

Reflecting the huge local and international demand for skills and talent, we will initiate a National Digital Workforce Plan that can meet the needs of our startup community. Importantly, our National Digital Workforce Plan will not only focus on deepening the pool of talent available to support our startups – it will also aim to boost the digital skills base across the breadth of our economy.

The key priorities of this plan will include:

- Strengthening the flow of entrants into the workforce who are keen to develop their information and communications technology (ICT) skills and seek opportunities within our digital economy.
- Improving the quality of ICT teaching in schools, vocational and tertiary education arenas.
- Strengthening the quality and suitability of tertiary graduates for entry-level positions.
- Addressing the low levels of representation by female and mature-aged workers within our broader ICT workforce population.
- Lifting the functional knowledge of ICT within traditional industries and existing companies, to ensure we have a workforce that is capable of quickly adapting to technological change.
- Boosting the digital skills within small to medium sized enterprises.

In addition, a Shorten Labor Government will establish a permanent Australian Healthcare Reform Commission to assist all levels of government to continuously improve our healthcare system. The creation of the Commission will include the re-establishment of Health Workforce Australia. The Commission will identify issues and drive reforms in our health workforce – potentially including the digital health workforce.

### **4. Do you support policies that promote a re-allocation of existing health funding towards evidence based preventative and health promotion programs?**

A Shorten Labor Government will tackle Australia's chronic disease crisis through a preventive health package aiming to raise healthy kids and keep Australians well throughout their lives.

Chronic diseases are the leading cause of illness, disability and death in Australia, with one in three Australians suffering from at least one chronic disease, like heart disease or diabetes.

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Many of these diseases are due to preventable risk factors such as physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking and harmful use of alcohol.

A Shorten Labor Government will tackle these risk factors by:

- Investing in 50 Healthy Communities nationwide, to help the communities that are at greatest risk of chronic disease to stay well.
- Tackling obesity through Australia's first National Physical Activity Strategy and a National Nutrition Framework.
- Expanding the successful Better Health Channel initiative into the nationwide platform for health information.
- Continuing to drive down smoking rates, particularly in at-risk communities.
- Addressing harmful use of alcohol through a National Alcohol Strategy.

**5. Do you support changes to the MBS items covering telehealth which would make GP consultations "technology neutral"; so that clinicians and patients can choose online consultations rather than only *traditional* medical consultations.**

A Shorten Labor Government will strengthen primary care, in particular the care provided through general practice. Labor will promote the appropriate use of Telehealth services.

New models of primary care will also include the design of a uniquely Australian model of patient-centred medical homes – Your Family Doctor. This new model will invest in innovative primary care that draws on new technology, for example the CSIRO pilot home monitoring trial.

Thank you for writing to us on these important issues.

Yours Sincerely,

ALP Information Services Unit

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