

Response to the Western Australian Government Sustainable Health Review



HISA 

AUSTRALIA'S DIGITAL HEALTH COMMUNITY

On behalf of Australia's digital health community, HISA commends this submission to the Sustainable Health Review Panel, and wish them well in their deliberations. Our Board and members would welcome further involvement in the review process, either within the Panel's current terms of reference or beyond.

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Setting the Scene

The Western Australian Government Sustainable Health Review (SHR) provides an excellent opportunity to consider how digital transformation could significantly improve health outcomes for all Western Australians. Already, numerous key digital initiatives are converging which can be leveraged, particularly the national digital health strategies by the Australian Digital Health Agency (the 'agency'). During 2018, there will be a national roll-out of the opt-out My Health Record (MyHR), which will connect consumers, carers and clinicians, sharing timely information enabling continuity of care across the health ecosystem.

Although the MyHR initiative brings opportunities, there are additional actions to be undertaken at a State level to address the challenges we are experiencing in WA. The SHR terms of reference and public submission questions are seeking informed advice on a range of key issues. These include:

- Existing investments that may be leveraged
- New initiatives that can stimulate innovation and transform healthcare delivery models; and
- Partnerships that can facilitate integrated and co-ordinated care.

For many years the Western Australian Public Health System has been at the forefront of designing, developing and delivering digital healthcare solutions, which provide a wide range of benefits for both consumers and providers. Examples include:

- Many collaborative data linkage initiatives, dating back 40 years
- Telehealth for regional, rural and remote areas, plus, in more recent times, at the Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH); and
- A robust Hospital Morbidity Data System (HMDS), which has been in place for twenty years.

At the same time, however, like in all other jurisdictions and globally, many investment decisions, while well-intended, have perpetuated healthcare information silos (site-specific and purpose-specific). Furthermore, healthcare services continue to work with many legacy systems which no longer support modernisation of the healthcare services sector and constrain opportunities for innovation. Technological advancements such as smartphones, tablets, the cloud and the Internet of Things (IoT), has created significant opportunities for the design, development and delivery of more agile, connected systems, which inherently support the new rapidly evolving and demanding business models for providing healthcare services.

The challenge in this rapidly emerging technological environment is for healthcare service providers to work collaboratively and for vendors to support interoperable systems in order to promote convergence of solutions and a more connected healthcare system. For example, with current, proven and robust technologies, it would be feasible for Western Australia to rationalise and support one pervasive telehealth system. Such systems have demonstrated significant benefit realisation elsewhere and in very similar geographical situations to Western Australia. For example, the Ontario Telehealth Network (OTN) has been in place for a decade and has proven its success in delivering vital healthcare services across the state. There are many other practical examples, such as the Comprehensive Alberta Netcare System, which has revolutionised the management of patient referrals, providing significant benefits to consumers, clinicians and service providers. These types of new agile pervasive systems are key essential enablers for delivering a future sustainable healthcare system in Western Australia.

Without question, digital transformation is and will continue to enable beneficial and productive changes across all industries and service sectors, including healthcare. The Health Informatics Society of Australia (HISA) makes this submission focusing on the specific contribution that astute investment

in information and technology can enable to enhance workforce capability and the health system's capacity for delivering high quality, safe and efficient healthcare in WA.

Imagine a digital future that inspires new ways to engage with and deliver health services and changes the way we work to deliver better healthcare outcomes for individuals and the population. This is the opportunity that WA has to deliver a healthcare system that creates new knowledge so we can get better at keeping people healthy and caring for the ill.

About HISA—the digital health community across Australia

This submission is made on behalf of the members of the Health Informatics Society of Australia (HISA). HISA is Australia's peak professional body for the digital health, e-health and health informatics community. HISA has an established track record in corporate and university sector collaboration, strong government relationships and industry connections. As a leading member of the global health informatics network, HISA is highly regarded and respected for the diverse and multi-disciplinary community it represents and for its independent voice in the transformation of Australian healthcare.

In making this submission, HISA engaged its vast community nation-wide to contribute professional advice that would articulate the actions needed to encourage digital innovation and empower the healthcare workforce to use new technology and information more effectively. Digital health requires investment and careful stewardship but ultimately, it is simply about making healthcare good again.

Insights from HISA digital health community

The insights of members across a variety of settings throughout the Australian healthcare sector have contributed to this submission. Their insights and knowledge stem from:

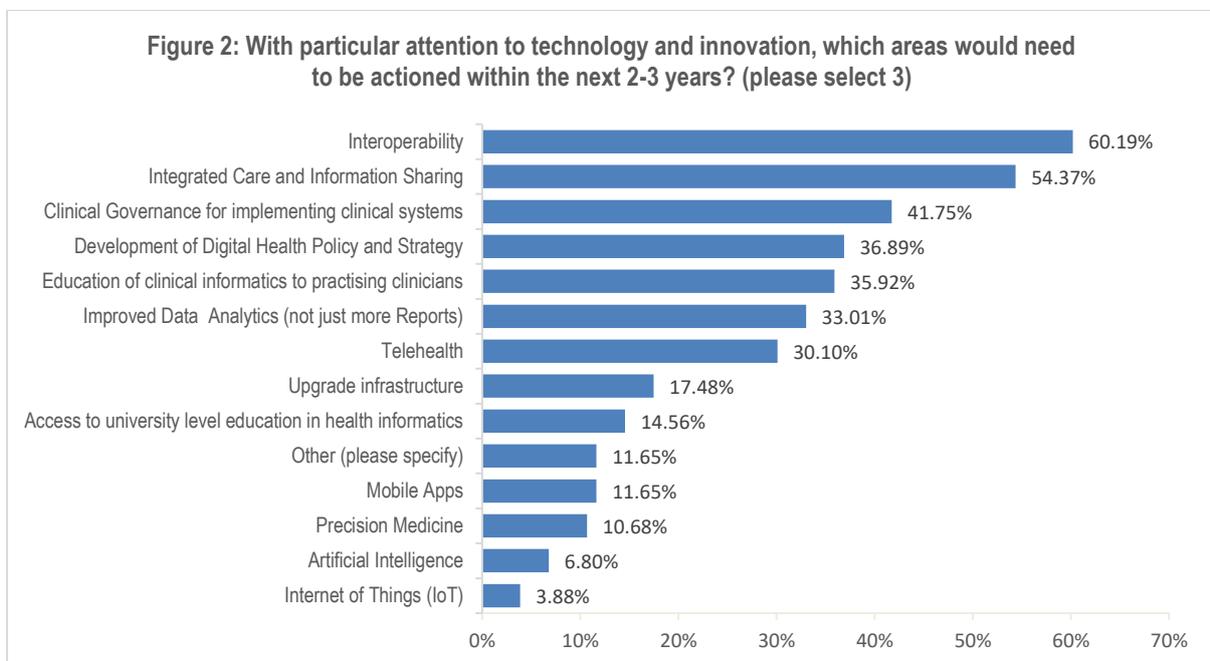
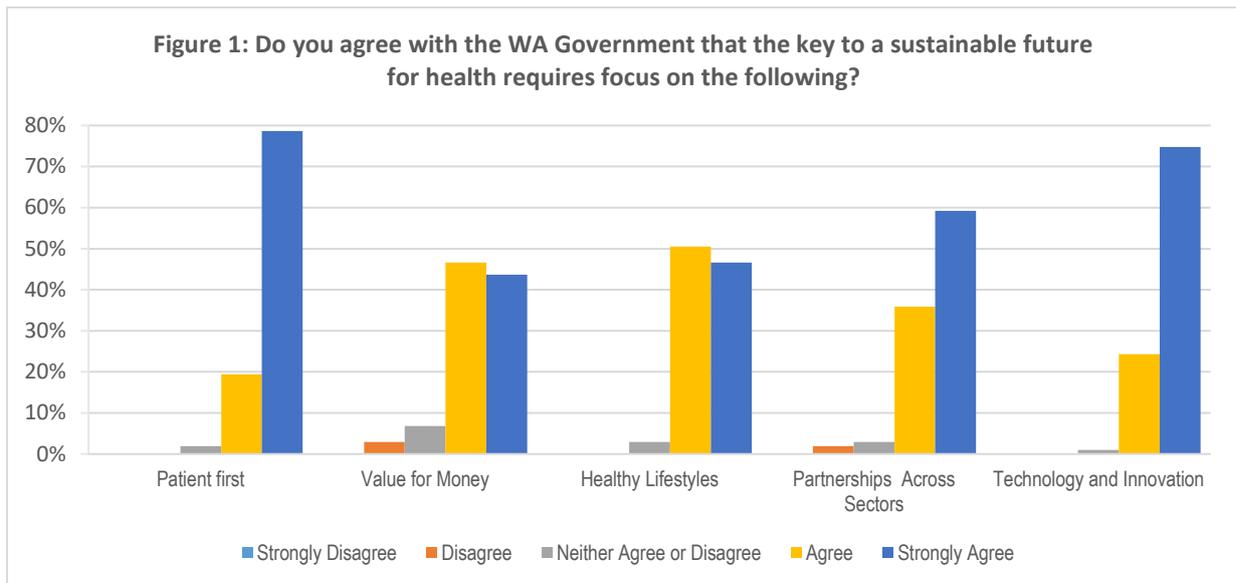
- Lessons learned from previous experience
- Vendors, agencies and individuals with a stakeholder interest in healthcare; and
- Diversity of thought to catalyse innovation

In total, 103 HISA members across Australia, males (54%) and females (46%) respectively, contributed professional advice for this submission. All Australian states and territories with the exclusion of the Northern Territory responded. The age profile suggests extensive career experience (95% aged 30 years+) and representing a cross-section of organisations across public and private hospitals (30%), vendors (21%) and private and community-based settings. Of note, **input was received from a large proportion of clinicians (43%) and those individuals involved in ICT (38%).**

HISA members across Australia commend the Sustainable Health Review's stated roles and functions, with respondents confirming with high levels of agreement a sustainable healthcare future must focus on a patient first approach technology and innovation, and partnerships across sectors (Figure 1). Noting in particular that **putting the patient first should be the priority.**

From a selection of 14 priorities that could potentially be considered over the coming two to three years, HISA members identified their top three for which the WA health system ought to prioritise (Figure 2). **Interoperability, integrated care and information sharing** along with clinical governance for implementing clinical systems occupy the top three spots.

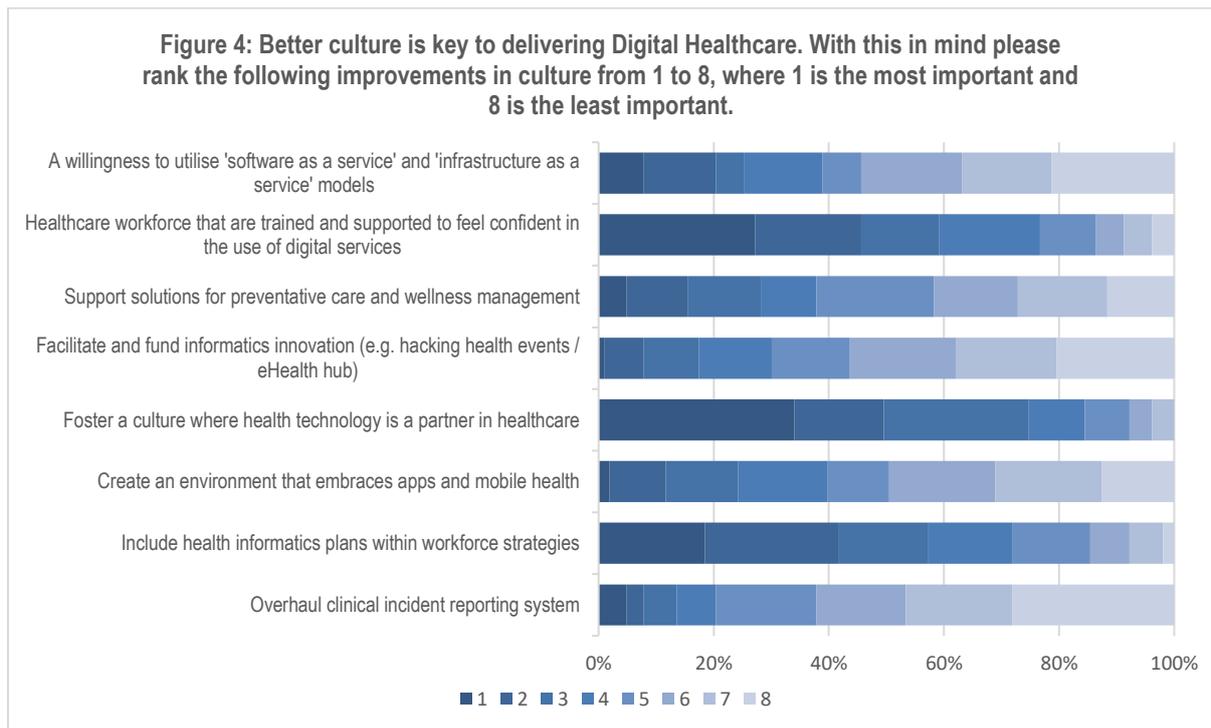
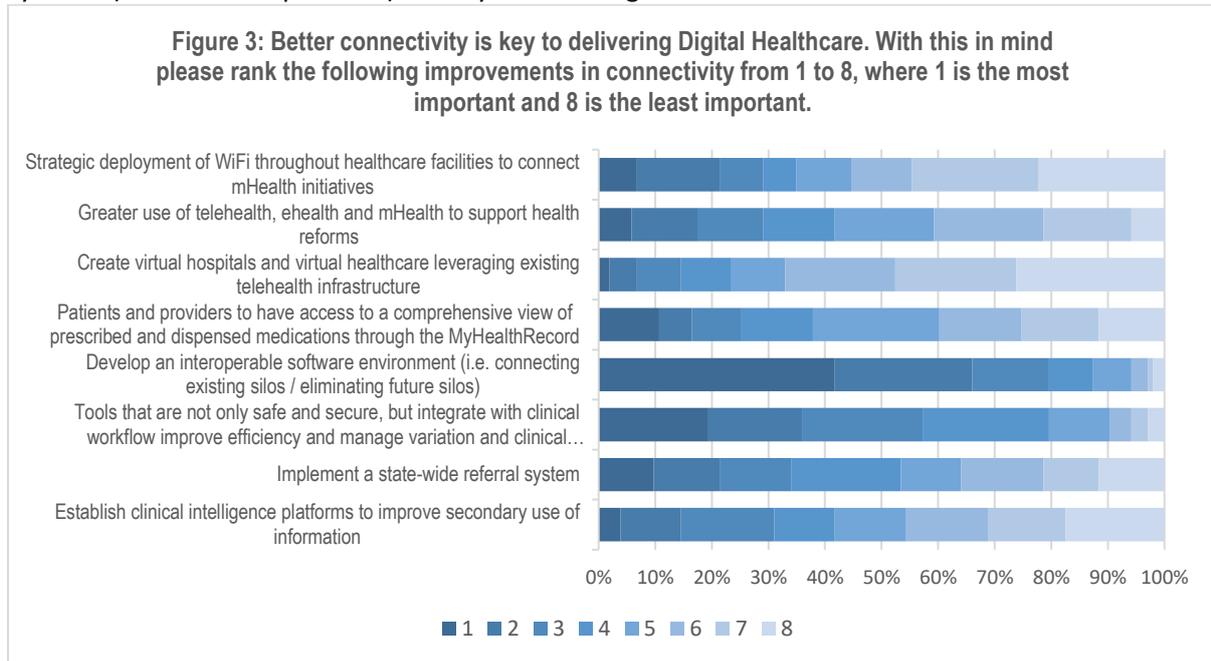
As part of focus group activities conducted locally with WA HISA members throughout September 2017, **three foundations were identified as underpinning WA's strategy for a sustainable health environment.** These were **Connectivity, Culture, and Collaboration.** These foundations framed the questions that sought to understand how these could better facilitate sustainable healthcare and digital health.



For **Connectivity** (figure 3) *develop an interoperable software environment* (to reduce the number of information silos), was by far the stand out viewpoint. Learning from Queensland Health’s success with their Viewer platform, existing data silos can be connected and information shared between health service providers, including GP read only access. HISA members were also keen to see *clinically relevant tools* that are not only safe and secure but integrated into clinical workflow. While other options may not have ranked as highly, HISA considers there is merit in the Panel considering existing tools that enable connectivity, particularly where they currently exist and are achieving benefits e.g. telehealth. However, there is value in assessing current programs to ensure they continue to meet needs and are fit-for-purpose.

For **Culture** (Figure 4), there was a strong emphasis on initiatives that recognise the integral role of *health technology as a partner with healthcare* as well as the need to build workforce capability (*health workforce trained and supported to use digital services; and health informatics is incorporated within workforce strategies*). There needs to be better alignment between technology and clinical workflow. Experience in other jurisdictions has been that a design-thinking approach with early involvement of end users and understanding of consumer experiences minimises some of the frustrations

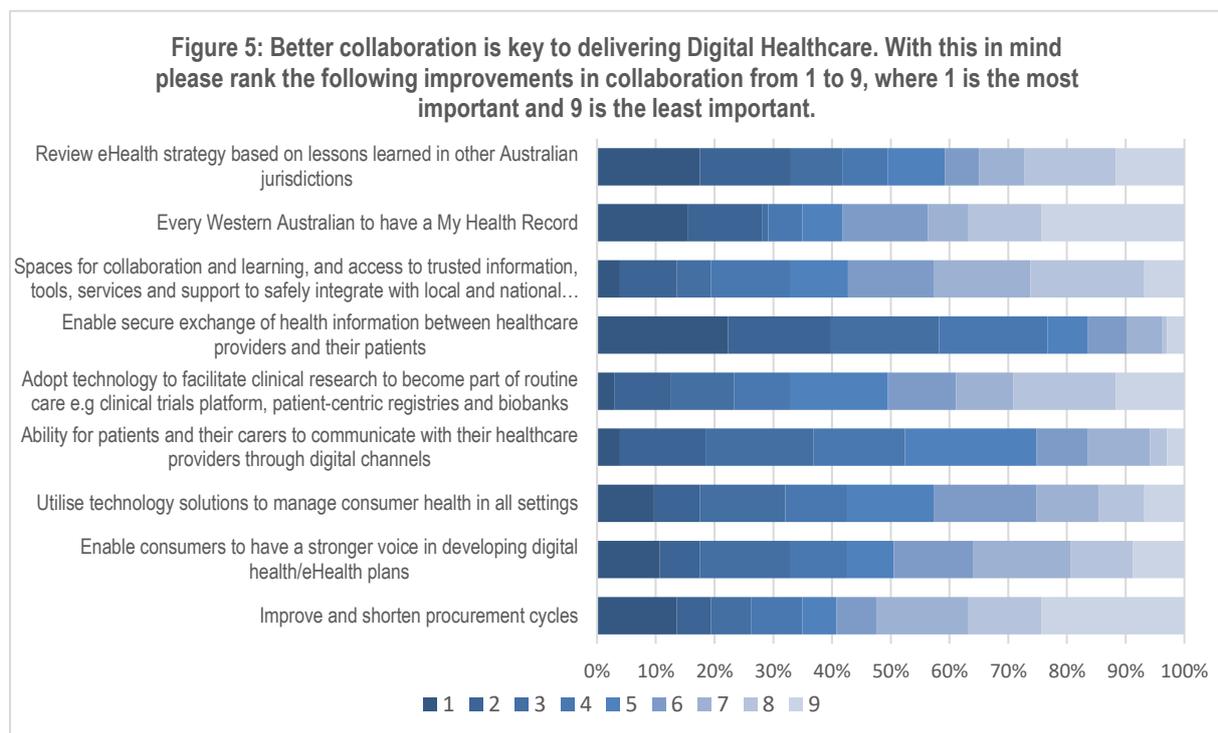
experienced as healthcare becomes increasingly digital. There is evidence that usability of digital systems (UX or User Experience) is a key factor in digital transformation success.



Successive state governments have ignored the critical importance of building digital health workforce capability. It is not simply about learning how to functionally use technology; rather, it is the transformative potential that comes with rethinking current practice. There are a number of concurrent strategies that should be considered. Firstly, aim to target the current workforce through industry approved certification, education and training programs to raise levels of digital health competency. Secondly, to influence the curricula of accredited health and medical science degrees to include core, essential health informatics competencies.

For **Collaboration** (figure 5), there was a clear message that we cannot achieve a sustainable healthcare environment if we continue to operate in silos. It is essential that all stakeholders, whether patient, provider, vendor or otherwise, work together in partnership to achieve sustainability of the healthcare system. In addition, the role of patients as active participants is not only essential, it is non-negotiable. Participatory models tell us that information must be accessible to clinicians and patients/consumers as and when required if we are to achieve the efficiencies and benefits expected with digital health (such as reduce duplication of effort and tests, reduced errors).

In order for this to occur we must digitally enable healthcare to *securely share and exchange information between providers and patients*. The *ability for patients and their carers to communicate with their healthcare providers through digital channels* and *utilise technology to manage consumer health in all settings* is a strong message that is percolating through this theme of collaboration.



CONCLUSION

The healthcare environment has become so large and unwieldy and chronic disease so complex to manage that more doctors and nurses or more hospital beds or more funding are *no longer* the solutions to the problem. We need to be a lot more judicious in using the resources we currently have through capitalising upon the investments that have already been made. This extends beyond hardware and software, but leveraging the rich sources of information and gaining benefit from the insight gained by connecting disparate sources together.

The way forward is to design, develop and deliver a more agile, integrated health system, which also inherently supports the new, rapidly evolving and demanding business models for providing healthcare services. **The core themes we have identified, Connectivity, Culture and Collaboration are the key enablers for delivering the sustainability of Western Australia’s healthcare system, realised through a contemporary and robust digital healthcare ecosystem.**