



MEDIA RELEASE
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CONNECTED HEALTH FOR PATIENTS AND PRODUCTIVITY
An Opportunity for Political Leadership

The Medical Technology Association of Australia's (MTAA) Connected Healthcare Advisory Group (CHAG) has this week submitted its response to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into productivity titled 'Digital Health for Patients and Productivity'.

The submission outlines how the inquiry should focus on digital health, now called Connected Health, as an opportunity for Australia to transform its health system and improve the wellness of all Australians as a key avenue to productivity growth.

MTAA CEO, Ian Burgess, said advances in Connected Health needed to be front and centre of the nation's productivity agenda and warrant their own Productivity Commission inquiry.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shown just how critical Connected Health is, particularly when governments and the health system require dynamism and speed to address challenges," Mr Burgess said.

"Connected Health will become increasingly central to the way governments think about solving problems. That's why we need to be selecting, investing in, and implementing Connected Health solutions across our health, aged care and disability care systems now."

In its 2017 review, *Shifting the Dial*, the Productivity Commission identified policies to make 'healthier Australians' a top priority to improving the nation's productivity. Included in the report were recommendations that specifically address Connected Health and described ways Connected Health could play an integral part in this objective.

MTAA's mission over the coming months ahead is helping policymakers and decisionmakers better understand what Connected Health means on both a macro and micro level. Connected Health isn't just telehealth, but also remote monitoring and alerts, digital patient care and self-care tools, artificial intelligence and effective sharing of health data and records.

Connected Health doesn't just apply to patients undergoing treatment, but also to people at risk or in need of further support, including the clinically ill, the aged and those living with disability. In short, Connected Health means utilising information and communication technology solutions to advance patient care and support the most vulnerable amongst us.

As vital as Connected Health will continue to be in the months and years ahead it still, too often, lacks the funding, infrastructure and political will to seize the opportunities staring Australia in the face.

The CHAG's submission calls for the Productivity Commission to investigate and consider a number of recommendations including:

1. Community funding scheme for digital devices

There is currently no pathway to obtain reimbursement for a digital health application for use in the community. This creates a major structural barrier to their uptake. MBS only covers services provided by health care professionals. Germany's DiGA pathway provides a strong example to follow.

2. Updated MBS digital health item numbers

Effective use of Connected Healthcare requires involvement and support from health care professionals and the MBS needs to be reviewed to reflect this.

3. Review approaches to HTA for digital health interventions

The upcoming HTA Review being run by the Department of Health should incorporate a specific emphasis on the right approach to assessing and funding digital health devices. The nature of digital innovation means that traditional approaches will often not be appropriate

4. Additional digital health funding under the National Health Reform Agreement

The Commonwealth and states and territories should agree to specifically inject funding for Connected Healthcare investments under specific terms and conditions. This would need to extend beyond the concept of pilots to broad based investments within certain guardrails.

5. Integrating digital health solutions in Aged Care

The Aged Care Royal Commission recommendation that 'innovation, continuous improvement and contemporary best practice in aged care are to be promoted' is very applicable to use of Connected Health tools including:

- Telehealth programs to support people in their own home with afterhours care or access to GPs
- Supporting the use of My Health Record and Electronic National Residential Medication Charts (eNRMC) in Home Care since most aged care support clients live in their own home not in residential facilities
- Integration between My Health Record and the Aged Care Record in My Aged Care to allow visibility by healthcare professionals to the spectrum of support provided to those in aged care programs

6. Policy changes to improve Australia's economic performance

Prioritise policy changes to improve Australia's economic performance and the health and wellbeing of Australians through access to new medical technologies and Connected Health solutions which support a connected healthcare system and support the development and commercialisation of related products and services, with areas including

- Accelerating adoption of the necessary policy reforms to drive connected systems that enable end to end patient engagement in a virtual setting.
- Improved patient outcomes with the establishment of an Ethical Standards Advisory Board with direct scope of digitised health services.
- A national framework that addresses the core ecosystem for Connected Health across privacy & security and should provide the minimum standards for Connected Health services in Australia and acknowledge the risk that we extend to end point systems (i.e., in the home).

ENDS