

Communique

Long-term Strategic Guidance of Australia's Digital Health and Health Data Infrastructure Virtual Workshop | 5 June 2025

On 5th June 2025, Research Australia and Digital Health CRC co-hosted a virtual workshop with key stakeholders from across the health and medical data, research and innovation ecosystem, including government, academia, and industry. The workshop explored how a unified national coordinated data capabilities could strengthen data-driven healthcare, accelerate research and innovation, and improve health outcomes and economic performance. It focused on how such coordination could be structured, where it might be best situated, and how it could align with current reforms, particularly the National Health and Medical Research Strategy (National Strategy), the Strategic Examination of R&D (SERD), and the National Research Infrastructure Roadmap (NRIR).

The event brought together 25 representatives from 18 organisations, including government representatives from the National Strategy, SERD, and NRIR secretariats and policy directors.

The workshop was facilitated by Research Australia's Head of Policy and Advocacy, Dr Talia Avrahamzon. Professor Annette Schmiede, CEO of Digital Health CRC and Research Australia Board Member, provided a policy overview, supported by a presentation on key challenges and opportunities in the current health data research ecosystem. Issues highlighted included the lack of national leadership or long-term strategy to optimise Australia's health and medical data, limited discoverability due to fragmentation, barriers to timely data access, the need for strategic consolidation under national stewardship, under-developed person-centred data infrastructure, and undefined long-term investment continuity, all of which risk data value realisation.

The National Strategy Secretariat; SERD panel member Professor Fiona Wood AO and Secretariat; and NRIR Policy lead shared updates on their visions, consultation findings, and invited strategic input from participants. All acknowledged that no single initiative or entity can address these challenges alone. There was strong recognition of the need for coordinated, system-wide solutions to unlock the potential of health data as a national asset.

Participants then engaged in interactive dialogue on achieving success. There were consistent calls for coordinated, sustainable investment in data capability, national stewardship and clear governance structures across the ecosystem, including all levels of government and industry. The approach should build on current strengths, be informed by nationally agreed priorities and standards, and offer secure, future-proof access for all users. It must be person-centred, community-driven, inclusive, and ensure prevention of bias. Public trust, ethical frameworks, social licence, and managing complexity were also seen as foundational.

There was strong consensus on the urgency and critical need for a bipartisan national framework involving government, industry, and the broader health and medical research community. Such a framework should guide long-term investment and coordination in Australia's health and medical data infrastructure, enabling world-leading data-driven research, improvement, and innovation.

Research Australia and the Digital Health CRC, along with the attendees listed below, and including Australian e-Health Research Centre (CSIRO) and Calvary Health, are committed to advancing this urgent opportunity provided by the National Strategy, SERD, and NRIR. As a community, we are resolved to work in partnership to drive this national priority and build this critical asset for Australians' health and the nation's economic prosperity.

For further information contact: tal.avrahamzon@researchaustralia

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