Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy Consultation Summary

We listened…we heard

Key themes from feedback on the draft Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy

# How and why did we engage?

The Department of Health and Aged Care undertook extensive consultation on the draft Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy from October 2022 to November 2023.

During this time we heard from older people and carers, service providers, technology vendors supporting these providers, peak bodies, professional associations representing workers in aged care and research organisations.

There were a number of different ways that people could engage with us to tell about their pain points and how data and digital improvements could provide better care for older people. We have summarised the key themes we heard from each stakeholder group and have used this feedback to strengthen the strategy and guide development of its action plan.

Focus groups

20 small group sessions to gather insights, perspectives, recommendations and ideas for our action plan and strategy. This opened up early thinking in broader groups and allowed time for follow-up interviews.

Interviews

35 individual sessions to explore opportunities and challenges raised in focus groups, and identified examples of data and digital initiatives that were working well.

Forums/committees

13 public forums, such as the Department’s Tech Talks and committees including the Council Of Elders to collect insights and input into the development of our action plan and strategy.

Public webinars

4 broad one hour sessions to raise awareness of, and allow input into, the development of the strategy. This included an interactive question and answer time to allow everyone to be heard.

Online submissions

Anyone had the opportunity to provide their feedback on the strategy via email. There were 62 submissions.

# Who did we engage with?

We engaged with Primary Health Networks, State and Territory and Federal Government agencies. Focus groups and interviews were also held with the following stakeholder groups.

**Majority of stakeholders support the strategy and agree with its vision, priorities and outcomes.**

Stakeholder groups engaged:

* twenty-three older people and carers. It helped us understand their pain points and ensure they are at the centre of the strategy
* fifty-five service providers. It helped us understand their key barriers, digital maturity and identify strategic priorities
* six ICT vendors. It helped us understand how we can build confidence to invest and innovate in software for service providers
* twenty-two research organisations. It helped us capture current research and emerging technologies and understand their data needs to improve insights into the aged care system
* six professional associations. It helped us understand connections between health and care sectors, and gaps in digital literacy
* eighteen peak bodies. It helped us ensure the strategy considers the complexity of the aged care sector as a whole.

## Older people and carers

“Not everybody is online, not everyone is tech savvy. We then become excluded.”

Key themes from older people and carers:

* **Maintain choice**, older people want to choose how to access information and services.
* **High willingness to learn**, however there is not the widespread ‘know how’ to build and sustain digital skills.
* **Digital inclusion** a concern for many including people with disability, First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities and those living in rural and remote areas.
* **Devices and internet access are not affordable** or always available for some older people and their carers.
* **Trust and confidence** is low with the need to safeguard privacy and security of data and digital channels.

## Service Providers

“Providers need more certainty about the future, these things don’t happen overnight”

Key themes from service providers:

* **Workforce challenges are worsening in the sector** and we need solutions that can free up time and resources to improve the quality of care.
* **Data and digital maturity across the sector is varied,** particularly given the increasing pace of change. An uplift can support more time for care.
* **Standards and integration are needed.** Inefficiencies and gaps in service provision and day-to-day operations are created due to lack of system interoperability.
* **Digital and data improvements** should make care easier with automation and streamlining of non-care tasks which are key to generating efficiencies.
* **Rural and remote providers need tailored** support to enable them to fully benefit from improvements in data and digital technologies.

## Technology Vendors

“The technology is possible and there is lots of innovation, but the path is not clear.”

Key themes from technology vendors:

* **Guidance and clarity across the sector is vital** to build confidence to invest in digital solutions.
* **Partnerships between service providers, government and technology vendors** is instrumental to innovation and developing solutions to long-standing challenges.
* **Aged care and health sectors are not well linked**, leading to system inefficiencies and hindering outcomes.
* **Data standards and streamlined, easy-to-use systems are key** to increasing efficiency and freeing up more time for care.

## Peak Bodies

“Aged care needs an overarching framework that articulates the purpose and application of data and digital systems within the sector.”

Key themes from peak bodies:

* **Aged care is a complex landscape**, so integration of data and digital technology is even more important.
* **Diversity of older people should be accommodated** with needs of First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and those living in rural and remote areas considered.
* **Building confidence and trust for older people and carers** may improve uptake of digital avenues.
* **Sharing information on care** is important within aged care, and between aged care and other sectors across the health system.
* **Many in the workforce lack the capability to adopt emerging technologies** with training, peer support and digital mentors all needed.

## Research Organisations

“You have various data collections, and these need common data standards to make the best use of information.”

Key themes from research organisations:

* **Data standardisation** will enable better research, more insights into aged care and interoperability with health and other support sectors.
* **Sharing contemporary data more rapidly** will allow researchers to evaluate emerging threats and opportunities to health and aged care.
* **Data and digital capability of the sector is variable,** making it even more important to collect accurate information once and reuse wherever possible.

## Professional Associations

“We need to understand how the workers operate and intersect with other sectors.”

Key themes from professional associations:

* **Data and digital literacy is relatively low in the aged care sector** and lags behind other sectors.
* **We need to make it easier for workers and clinicians to work across sectors** such as health and aged care to increase efficiency and better coordinate care.
* **Workforce challenges are an ongoing issue** leaving little time to innovate or adopt emerging technology.

## Government

“We need to think about how we can innovate and better use digital to help solve persistent issues with the aged care system.”

Key themes from government:

* **A shared understanding of data and digital** challenges can drive greater cooperation between health, aged care and other support sectors including disability support and veterans’ care.
* **Interoperability and integration** between different platforms and sectors will ensure efficient and secure sharing of data between care providers, improving care and coordination.
* **Data governance and privacy** to maintain the confidentiality and security of sensitive health information.

## Next Steps

We appreciate all the time and effort that has gone into providing feedback for the Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy. An Action Plan will accompany the final Strategy. The Action Plan will be regularly updated based on your feedback and Government priorities.

We will continue to accept any feedback and suggestions to assist the implementation process, please email DigitalReformStrat@Health.gov.au.