Learning Health System Strategic Advisory Committee

Chair's report – 18 August 2026

The Learning Health System Strategic Advisory Committee ("the committee") met for the sixth time on 18 August 2026.

The committee continued to refine draft guiding principles which, subject to decisions of government and further consultation, could underpin inclusive and trustworthy governance data arrangements for research and public health use of My Health Record data.

The committee discussed the principle that research or public health use of health data should be ethical and culturally safe. Particular attention was given to integrity, equity and the recognition that Indigenous data governance should be subject to Indigenous-led governance. Members agreed that ethical use of health data requires any proposed use to align with societal values and the reasonable expectations of individuals and communities. This includes ensuring data is used securely, privacy is protected (discussed at last meeting) and any research or public health use is in the public interest.

Public trust and community confidence must be maintained if the significant benefits for individuals and for society of a learning health system are to be achieved. This extends to requiring trustworthy governance of emerging technology and data analytics capabilities. In this context, the committee began to consider how the governance principles being developed should evolve to address issues associated with Artificial Intelligence.

Ethical, Culturally Safe, and Trustworthy

Three presentations informed committee members' discussion. These presentations were on (1) a recent series of Indigenous-led roundtables on developing Learning Health System capabilities in Australia, (2) equity focused program implementation, and (3) the opportunities and risks of Artificial Intelligence.

Indigenous roundtables

The Indigenous Data Network presented the findings from a series of Indigenous-led roundtables held in Cairns, Brisbane and Alice Springs. The roundtables were designed to inform the development of a Learning Health System and any future research and public health use of My Health Record data. Key themes from the consultation included the importance of Indigenous governance being embedded within decision-making structures, trust, meaningful ongoing, place-based and community-led engagement, and demonstrable community benefit as a prerequisite for data access and use. Participants also expressed strong support for significant investment in Indigenous data capability, communication and literacy. The draft principle on Indigenous data governance, proposing Indigenous oversight mechanisms and an Indigenous data sub-committee with responsibility for the assessment of applications using Indigenous data was supported.

Equity

Professor Helen Skouteris from Monash University presented on the importance of embedding equity within learning health systems during the design phase. Discussion focused on the role of governance arrangements in promoting equitable outcomes and noted the value of inclusive governance and incorporation of multiple forms of knowledge such as community knowledge, Indigenous knowledge and lived experience. The presentation reinforced the importance of equity as a key consideration embedded during planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

Artificial intelligence and ethical data use

Committee member Gaby Carney, a Senior Fellow from the UTS Human Technology Institute, presented on the opportunities and risks associated with artificial intelligence. The committee discussed current and emerging uses of AI across healthcare, research and public health, as well as key laws, risks and challenges relating to privacy, security, transparency, accountability, reliability and fairness. Members agreed that governance arrangements should appropriately recognise both the opportunities and risks associated with AI while avoiding duplication of existing ethics and review processes. The committee supported developing governance principles that are sufficiently flexible and future-focused to remain relevant as technologies continue to evolve.

Governance Principles

Drawing on these three presentations, the committee discussed the respective governance principles concerning ethical and culturally safe use of health data. It was agreed that governance arrangements should focus on trustworthiness, accountability, integrity and responsible data use while ensuring equity considerations are appropriately reflected throughout design, implementation and evaluation. Members discussed the need to strengthen connections between national governance arrangements and existing regional governance structures and emphasised the importance of place-based approaches, regional representation, and accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Looking forward

The committee agreed that additional consideration should be given to reviewing terminology used to describe the program to ensure effective public communication. Members also saw value in extending the forward agenda to include a dedicated meeting to review all of the governance principles as a whole to ensure it is a coherent and comprehensive framework. The committee supported the suggestion to include a representative from the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a formal member of the committee to contribute expertise in population health and data linkage.

The committee next meets on 21 October 2026.