



Overview – How the 2021–22 Budget is investing in digital health

Across the pillars of *Australia's Long Term National Health Plan*, the Australian Government is investing \$870.5 million in the modernisation of the health system. This investment will deliver innovative new methods to provide care, and continue the momentum for embracing new technologies achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Connecting Australians with health services, including GPs, nurses, specialists, midwives, allied health and mental health, has been critical in protecting patients and doctors from the risk of COVID-19 infection. It has also removed one of the biggest barriers to accessing health care for millions of Australians – distance. Through telehealth, a health professional can be available at the end of the phone or online.

The Government's digital health investments include:

- \$87.5 million to the Australian Digital Health Agency to help improve system preparedness and responsiveness
- \$32.3 million in continued funding for the 2018–2022 Intergovernmental Agreement on National Digital Health – ensuring interoperability within Australia's national digital health infrastructure
- \$301.8 million for the next wave of My Health Record (MHR), strengthening connections and ensuring better coordinated healthcare
- \$204.6 million to extend telehealth services until 31 December 2021, for services including GPs, specialists, nursing, midwifery, allied health, and allied mental health attendances
 - between 13 March 2020 and 6 May 2021, over 57.5 million MBS telehealth services have been delivered to 13.7 million patients, with \$2.9 billion in Medicare benefits paid. More than 83,800 providers have used telehealth services.
- \$45.4 million introducing electronic medication charts in residential aged care facilities, increasing utilisation and integration of MHR and establishing digital support for transitioning between aged care and hospital settings

- \$98.1 million to transform the Head to Health gateway into a comprehensive national platform, enhancing the availability of high quality, free and low cost digital mental health services
- \$50.7 million to continue to develop an ICT system that enables a voluntary patient registration (VPR) initiative, to be known as MyGP, improving health outcomes and lifting the quality of services delivered to Australian patients through continuity of care
- \$7.2 million for phase one of the development of an integrated electronic referral system for diagnostic imaging
- \$1.5 million to support the successful *Hello Sunday Morning Daybreak Program* available online or via mobile app to help Australians who want to change their relationship with alcohol, and
- \$36 million to assist the healthcare sector to digitally manage applications to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, Medical Services Advisory Committee, and Prostheses List applications through the Health Products Portal.

For further information, refer to the relevant fact sheets.

Why is this important?

The Australian Government's investments in digital health are driving improvements in health care delivery, access and efficiency. Support for new and innovative technologies and their application within the health, aged care and mental health systems are helping to deliver better outcomes for Australians and increasingly creating more equitable systems by removing barriers for access.

Improvements to efficiency, data sharing and the availability of information are also assisting with the affordability of health care, reducing or removing many administrative burdens and costs for providers.

Who will benefit?

All Australians will benefit from the increased modernisation of the healthcare system and the Australian Government's investment in digital technologies.

The uptake of innovative pathways to access healthcare services, advice and referrals has seen the access to healthcare for many Australians increase, particularly for Australians in rural, regional and remote areas.

Stronger connections between health care providers, regulators and government will also lead to increased efficiencies in service delivery, compliance monitoring and actions in response to compliance issues.

How much will it cost?

Combined, the Australian Government will invest around \$870.5 million in digital programs and innovations to our health care system.