

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Governments must increase funding in virtual care to improve patient outcomes and lead public education campaigns to support its adoption**

*AIIA releases new Whitepaper, 'Beyond Telehealth, Towards Virtual Care'*

The Australian Information Industry Association ([AIIA](#)), Australia's peak industry representative body for innovation technology, has released a Whitepaper titled, '[Beyond Telehealth, Towards Virtual Care](#)', recommending governments to make better use of the technological benefits of virtual care to advance patient and community outcomes.

Australia's ageing population will see health services continue to be stretched in coming years unless greater efficiencies are embraced led by modern digital technologies that patients increasingly expect. The pressure on hospital systems and emergency medicine is high following a year in which many deferred routine healthcare during lockdowns.

The adoption of telehealth or virtual care during COVID-19 lockdowns highlighted the possibilities for improved patient outcomes and driving efficiencies in the health sector including reducing patient waiting times for medical assessment.

The AIIA Whitepaper found that funding, training and greater adoption of digital health technology, including monitoring, diagnostic and co-working tools, at clinics and hospitals is key to the optimal implementation of telehealth. Further, it found the integration of hardware, software, people, processes, information, security and information technology systems must be encompassed in strategies to break down technology barriers.

The AIIA CEO, Ron Gauci said: "We must now embrace digital tools and improvements to Australia's healthcare system. The widespread adoption of telehealth during 2020 saw a leap forward in the use of technology that we must embed and maximise the benefits. There are great opportunities to improve patient outcomes and ease the pressure placed on health services.

"Procurement processes from governments must include provisions for telehealth and be agile to respond to changing technology and patient preferences. This is reflective of best practices across industries that governments at all levels need to adopt. Strong, local and agile procurement processes are needed to support the best technological practices and will support strong domestic digital capabilities.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for major reform and restructure of many parts of the Australian economy. Investment in innovative technology will support the continued progress from telehealth to virtual care. It is now up to governments to invest further in telehealth and virtual care to support its continued adoption and reduce the health costs passed on to taxpayers."

The Whitepaper details nine recommendations for governments focused on digitally

transforming the health industry, in a post-COVID-19 world:

1. That hospitals, practice managers, and government agencies demonstrate greater adoption of digital health tools and multi-party coworking platforms.
2. That governments adopt an expansive procurement panel enact long-term strategies of procurement and integration for virtual care and digital health tools.
3. That governments invest in digital inclusion and digital literacy campaigns in the health care context for consumers, carers and clinicians to enhance take-up of virtual care tools.
4. That governments approach virtual care through a public health and allocative efficiency lens, funding capable in-home virtual care to reduce inappropriate or unnecessary hospital or clinic attendance
5. That practices and hospitals engage in coordinated risk assessments and mitigation strategies for virtual care processes, with security oversight of each component in the virtual care solution.
6. That governments invest in funding infrastructure at the state and federal levels to progress telehealth towards meaningful, fully-leveraged virtual care.
7. That governments investigate procurement reform for telehealth ensuring procurement habits are agile, frequently refreshed and expansive.
8. That the Federal Government continue to prioritise the application of appropriate technical standards for telehealth and ICT-enabled consultations in Australia, including through the ongoing ADHA telehealth standards consultation project.
9. That Government to accept the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission on Telehealth particularly those that refer to common data sets and reimbursement of telehealth enabled preventative health measures

The AIIA's Health Policy and Advisory Network (PAN) formed a working group to research and write the whitepaper. Participants who contributed to the whitepaper included:

- Flinders University
- Victorian Department of Health
- eHealth NSW
- Queensland Health
- Nueva Solutions
- Telstra Health
- IBM
- NetApp
- Salesforce
- NBNCo
- Deloitte
- The Checkley Group
- SAS

The AIIA is a not-for-profit organisation aimed at fuelling Australia's future social and economic prosperity through technology innovation.

**ENDS**

**For media enquiries: Thrive PR and Communications**

Anissha Vijayan - Account Director

M: 0401 016 860

E: [anissha.vijayan@thrivepr.com.au](mailto:anissha.vijayan@thrivepr.com.au)

Michael Banks - Account Executive  
M: 0418 862 545  
E: [michael.banks@thrivepr.com.au](mailto:michael.banks@thrivepr.com.au)

Simon Bush - AIIA GM Policy and Advocacy  
M: 0417 642 200  
E: [simon@aiia.com.au](mailto:simon@aiia.com.au)

### **About the AIIA**

The Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) is Australia's peak representative body and advocacy group for those in the digital ecosystem. Since 1978 AIIA has pursued activities to stimulate and grow the digital ecosystem, to create a favourable business environment for members and to contribute to Australia's economic prosperity. We do this by delivering outstanding member value by providing a strong voice of influence; building a sense of community through events and education; enabling a network for collaboration and inspiration; and developing compelling content and relevant and interesting information.