



## Media Release

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### **My Health Record – a huge support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

My Health Record has a very positive role to play in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people according to leading health practitioners who work with Indigenous communities.

My Health Record is an online summary of a person's key health information. It allows them to share and control their health information with doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers from anywhere, at any time.

Julie Tongs OAM, who is the CEO of Winnunga Nimbitjyah Aboriginal Health and Community Services in Canberra has seen a significant rise in her clients' use of My Health Record and is calling on more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around Australia to also consider the benefits of having one.

The Australian Digital Health Agency's CEO, Tim Kelsey and Chief Medical Adviser, Professor Meredith Makeham today visited Winnunga at Narrabundah in Canberra.

Winnunga has more than 7,000 clients, many with multiple chronic conditions. It was an early adopter of My Health Record and now has more than 2,430 clients with a registered My Health Record.

"For all Aboriginal people this is a great initiative. I will be encouraging our clients to stay with My Health Record," said Julie Tongs.

"We have 790 transient clients so if, for example, a client from the Northern Territory visits us, it is not easy to get hold of their doctor. Having a My Health Record means our GP can access their important information quickly.

"What's really exciting now is that more and more information is being uploaded into records. The more information you have, particularly medicines information, the more useful My Health Record is.

"Maintaining privacy is paramount and I am glad that concerns about privacy have been addressed. So my advice now is to jump on board and support it. At the end of the day it will be worth it."

According to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Measures Survey 2012-13, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience more chronic disease overall and they tend to develop it at younger ages. Compared to non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more than four times as likely to be in the advanced stages of a chronic kidney disease and more than three times as likely to have diabetes. They are also more likely to have more than one chronic condition.

"Having a My Health Record can be particularly beneficial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may have chronic health conditions, those who move around a lot and those who live in remote areas of Australia," said Professor Meredith Makeham, Chief Medical Adviser at the Australian Digital Health Agency.

"It can save lives in emergency situations, which is why people should consider having one.

“We know people struggle to remember important details about their own medical history, including what medicines they have been prescribed or when they received medical treatment – My Health Record can do this for you. By ensuring your medical history is up-to-date and shareable with your healthcare providers, it can help reduce adverse drug events and unnecessary hospital admissions.”

Capital Health Network, which is the ACT’s primary health network, has been actively supporting the expansion of My Health Record in the ACT.

“ACT PHN’s Digital Health Team has been actively training and engaging with general practice, community pharmacy, allied health and medical specialists,” said Chief Executive of Capital Health Network, Adj. Prof Gaylene Coulton.

“We’ve been providing training and awareness sessions to health professionals to embed My Health Record use across health care providers, including Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services. We’ve also been out and about in the community actively engaging with consumers to increase their awareness of My Health Record.”

Mr Kelsey said the Australian Digital Health Agency has engaged with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) about how to communicate with health care providers and consumers, and has established partnerships with NACCHO and each of its State and Territory Affiliates.

“My Health record will help to close the gap by being available for people across health providers, when they travel, go into hospital or see a specialist,” said Mr Kelsey.

All 146 NACCHO member organisations that provide clinical services have received at least one education session on My Health Record. The Agency has also invited collaboration from the Indigenous Allied Health Association (IAHA), the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSiNaM), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA), and the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA).

More information on My Health Record can be found at [www.myhealthrecord.gov.au](http://www.myhealthrecord.gov.au). People who do not want a My Health Record can opt out by visiting the My Health Record website or by calling 1800 723 471 for phone-based assistance. Additional support is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with limited digital literacy, and those living in rural and remote regions. Material available on the My Health Record website also includes:

- [Information in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages](#) including [Kriol](#) and [Yumplatok](#) versions of the animation, brochure, poster, general factsheet, privacy and security factsheet
- [Sandra and Robert Ooi case study video on YouTube](#)
- [Awabakal Medical Services case study video on YouTube](#)
- [Esther Montgomery video on YouTube](#).

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**About the Australian Digital Health Agency:** The Agency is tasked with improving health outcomes for all Australians through the delivery of digital healthcare systems, and implementing [Australia’s National Digital Health Strategy – Safe, Seamless, and Secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia](#) in collaboration with partners across the community. The Agency is the System Operator of [My Health Record](#), and provides leadership, coordination, and delivery of a collaborative and innovative approach to utilising technology to support and enhance a clinically safe and connected national health system. These improvements will give individuals more control of their health and their health information, and support healthcare providers to deliver informed healthcare through access to current clinical and treatment information. Further information: [www.digitalhealth.gov.au](http://www.digitalhealth.gov.au).