

EAST ARNHAM ANNOUNCED AS SITE FOR DIGITAL HEALTH COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Under a national initiative led by the Australian Digital Health Agency, East Arnhem will become a Community of Excellence for digital health.

The new program is funded through a Commonwealth Government \$750 000 commitment over two years from the Australian Digital Health Agency (Agency) and a co-contribution valued at \$240 000 over two years from NT Health, Northern Territory Primary Health Network (NT PHN) and Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT).

The Communities of Excellence program aims to embed digital health capabilities in East Arnhem focused on four key initiatives: My Health Record system, secure messaging, telehealth and medicines safety.

Chief Executive of NT Health, Ms Catherine Stoddart said “The program aims to address a number of key health challenges facing residents of East Arnhem through improving patients’ records through providers all using the My Health Record system, raising awareness of medications, allergies and adverse reactions to medicines, improving telehealth services and allowing providers to securely share patient information so there is an integrated health care plan.

Leveraging and expanding digital health technologies will support us in preventing illness, reducing the burden of chronic disease management, promoting wellbeing and supporting our communities to live a healthy and productive life across their whole lifetime.”

East Arnhem was selected for the program based on a number of factors including the distance and remoteness and the impact severe weather and other factors on patients’ access to health services, including those to treat and manage chronic disease.

AMSANT Chief Executive Officer, John Paterson said “This is an important program to illustrate how digital technologies can improve health and wellbeing in remote communities and the East Arnhem project will provide a model that can be implemented in other remote communities – not just in the Territory but across Australia.”

The Agency has partnered with organisations to deliver two other projects as part of the Communities of Excellence program in Emerald, Queensland and also Port Hedland, Western Australia.

Agency General Manager, Travis Hodgson said “Digital health technology is widely recognised as the bedrock of future healthcare innovation.”





“The benefits for patients are significant and compelling: hospital admissions avoided, fewer adverse drug events, reduced duplication of tests, better coordination of care for people with chronic and complex conditions, and better-informed treatment decisions,” he said. “Digital health can help save and improve lives.”

Steve Renouf, Indigenous spokesperson for the Agency said “The Agency digital health COE initiatives across Australia really are cutting edge in terms of the way in which they engage and empower communities to take the lead in designing and embracing digital technology, which in turn ensures cultural respect and long-term sustainability.”

The announcement of East Arnhem as a region for the Communities of Excellence program is the result of ongoing collaboration between NT PHN, AMSANT and NT Health to promote improved integration across the primary health care system.

NT PHN Chief Executive Officer, Gillian Yearsley said “This partnership is critical to improving integration across the health system in the Territory. Through this initiative we will seek to adopt technologies to build innovative models of care for those in communities, in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and other providers.”

An overarching NT Digital Health Strategy will soon be released which focuses on leveraging digital capacity and capability to deliver streamlined health services to our communities.

Further information on the Communities of Excellence program is available at:

<https://conversation.digitalhealth.gov.au/communities-of-excellence>

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