

National Allied Health Practice Engagement Toolkit

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network

Torres and Cape | Cairns | Townsville | Mackay



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HNECC PHN worked closely with a Steering Group of members which included Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA), Indigenous Allied Health Association (IAHA), Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health Services (SARRAH), Department of Health and Aged Care Chief Allied Health Office and PHNs from the National PHN Cooperative's Implementation Framework Group (for the National PHN Allied Health in Primary Care Engagement Framework), Brisbane South PHN, Central Eastern Sydney PHN, Northern Sydney PHN, Northern Queensland PHN, Nepean Blue Mountains PHN, Primary Health Tasmania, Western Queensland PHN, and Western Sydney PHN.

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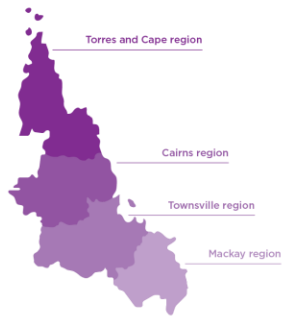




*Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN)
acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and
seas on which we live and work and pay our respects to
Elders past and present.*



NQPHN region



~70 

staff across three offices –
Cairns, Townsville, and Mackay

Established

1 July 2015

From 2021 to 2046, our population is
projected to increase by

↑ 35% to
909,807

722,606 

residents in North Queensland, including


75,693 


Indigenous people (10.8% of our population and 10.3% of total
Australian Indigenous population) Source: Queensland Health



31 Local Government
Areas (LGAs)

22 out of 31
LGAs have people
living in very
remote areas

79.8% 
of our population
live in 'outer
regional Australia'

7.2% 
of our population
live in 'remote' or
'very remote' areas

26.8% of our population are in the most
disadvantaged quintile as per the SEIFA index

 26.3%

of our population have one or more long-term
health conditions


 8.2%

The most common long-term health condition
for our region was Mental Health conditions
(including depression and anxiety)

 5.4%

of our population are in need of assistance with
a profound or severe disability

10.8% 
of our
population speak a
language other than
English at home

15.1% 
of our
population were
born overseas

5.1% 
of our region's population are either currently
or have previously served in the Australian
Defence Force

4 Hospital and Health Services 

13 ACCHOs 

62 Residential Aged Care Homes 

 181
general
practices

 1,609
general
practitioners

 3,191
allied health
professionals

 194
pharmacies

3,642/100,000

Potentially Preventable Hospitalisations
(National average 2,793/100,000 – 2017/18)



Current as at November 2023.

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Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are independent, not-for-profit organizations that regularly assess the specific health needs of their communities and commission services to address those needs. PHNs play a pivotal role in identifying health service gaps, working closely with communities, organizations, service providers and government to improve the coordination, accessibility, effectiveness and quality of local primary health services. There are 31 PHNs across Australia.

PHN engagement with the Allied Health sector has been varied, and constrained by funding, capacity and policy direction. However, as national health policies evolve towards a wellbeing system with a strong emphasis on prevention, there is an increasing recognition that Allied Health is a key part of primary health care. For example, Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan highlights the need for a greater focus on Allied Health to improve access, outcomes, integration, safety, quality and cost-efficiency across the health system.

In 2022, the National PHN Allied Health in Primary Care Engagement Framework was developed to support PHNs across Australia to increase their focus on Allied Health Professionals (AHPs), recognizing their key role as providers in an integrated patient-centred health care system. The Framework is structured around 6 key priority areas:

- Nationally-led collaboration
- Governance and Culture
- Practice Engagement
- Data, quality and digital maturity
- Workforce and access to Allied Health Care
- Integration, models of care and funding

This National Allied Health Practice Engagement Toolkit (the Toolkit) is a key initiative under the practice engagement priority.



Purpose of the Toolkit

The purpose of this Toolkit is to support AHPs in private practice with:

- Understanding the local health care system they operate in, including their local PHN and how to connect with other primary care professionals and referrers
- Understanding more about the services and resources that are offered by Allied Health peak bodies
- Accessing learning and education opportunities to build skills and capabilities to improve patient care
- Improving safety and quality in allied health care through tools that support improvement approaches
- Understanding and utilizing funding streams and accessing grant opportunities to support business efficiency and growth
- Understanding the use of different digital health care systems to improve integration and connectivity of the health care system, and to support practice efficiency.

How to use the toolkit

This Toolkit has 5 chapters that can be directly accessed from the Table of Contents. Each chapter contains a series of topics with a list of (mostly) online resources or tools. The collection of resources provide:

- Introductory information that is applicable for all AHPs on a topic area, with links to more information
- Practical guides, tools or educational resources that can be directly applied to clinical practice or business management
- The resources included in the Toolkit have been chosen for their:
 - Relevance to all AHPs practicing in primary care, and
 - Perceived longevity of reliable and relevant information.

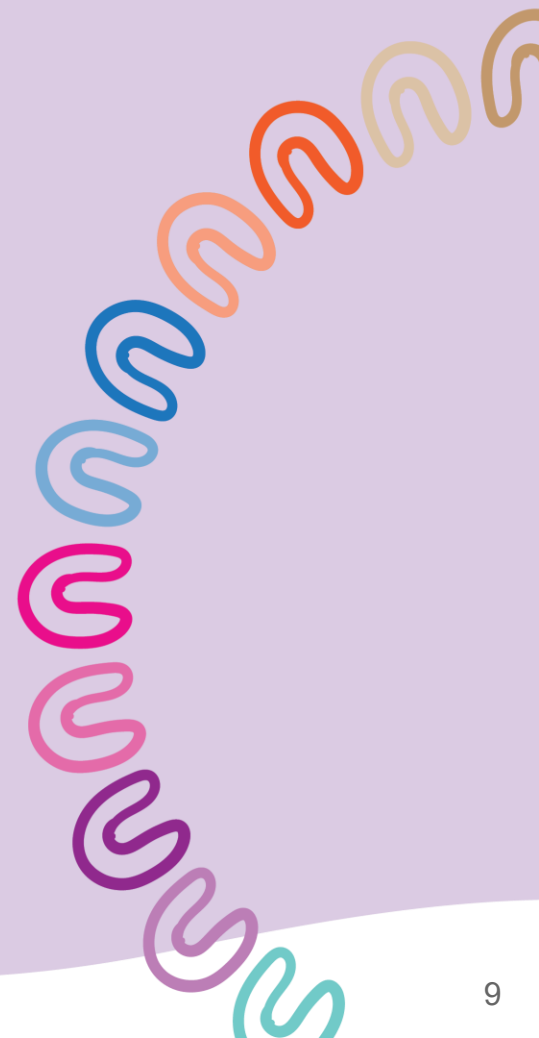
Most resources are publicly available, however there are some that may incur a fee. These re indicated with the symbol



Local Health System Navigation

Chapter Contents

1. Role of PHNs
2. Roles of different Allied Health professions
3. Role of Allied Health Associations
4. System navigation: service directories and clinical referral pathways



1.1 Role of PHNs in the local health system

Overview

PHNs are independent, not-for-profit organisations that regularly assess the specific health needs of their communities and commission services to address those needs. PHNs play a pivotal role in identifying health service gaps, working closely with communities, organisations, service providers and government to improve the coordination, accessibility, effectiveness and quality of local primary health services.

PHNs deliver 3 core functions:

- **Coordinate and integrate** local health care services in collaboration with Local Hospital Networks (LHNs) to improve quality of care, people's experience and efficient use of resources
- **Commission** primary care and mental health services to address local population health needs and gaps in service delivery and to improve access and equity
- **Capacity-build** and provide targeted training and support to primary care and mental health providers to support quality care delivery.

[The PHN Strategy \(2023-24\)](#) outlines PHNs' core functions and activities, priorities, and responsibilities as they relate to addressing community health and supporting the consistent delivery of national and commissioned health programs.

PHNs are uniquely positioned to support Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) to better integrate into the primary health care system. Their understanding of community health needs and the broader health care system can support AHPs to:

- develop the required business skills to access available grants and funding and meet service quality and regulatory requirements
- gain a better understanding of local service requirements, and connect with other primary care professionals in the region
- advocate for and promote the role and impact that AHPs have in delivering patient-centred care.

Together, closer engagement between PHNs and AHPs can promote the value of integrated models of care, with a focus on prevention and early intervention to improve patient outcomes and the cost effectiveness of health services.

Tools and resources

1	What Primary Health Networks do Describes the core functions of PHNs that are funded by the Dept of Health and Aged Care.	Department of Health and Aged Care
2	Find your local Primary Health Network Use the locator map to find the location, boundaries and contact details of your local PHN.	Department of Health and Aged Care
3	The National PHN Allied Health in Primary Care Engagement Framework The Framework seeks to encourage a consistent approach to supporting Allied Health service delivery to communities, define roles and approaches for engaging with the Allied Health sector, and drive change to increase collaboration between the Allied Health sector and PHNs. Framework Case Studies These case studies offer practical examples of PHN engagement with Allied Health and illustrate how the Framework can be applied across a variety of settings and key issue areas across Australia.	Hunter New England & Central Coast PHN

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network



Key contacts

PHN webpage with the most relevant information for Allied Health:

Insert link

General Allied Health enquiries:

Team name

Email/
phone

Digital health enquiries:

Email/ phone



Education and networking

Upcoming CPD/ education events:

[Education and CPD Opportunities](#)

Collaboration or networking opportunities:

[Workforce Development Programs](#)

Local communities of practice relevant to Allied Health professionals:

Insert link/s

Sign up to the PHN's newsletter:

[Newsletter Subscription](#)



Local health system navigation

PHN programs:

[Commissioned programs](#)

Clinical referral pathways:

Insert link to local clinical referral pathways (eg. HealthPathways or relevant PHN page)

Local contact: phone or email

Secure messaging:

Insert link to information about secure messaging platforms most used in PHN region



Open tenders and grants

Commissioning:

[Commissioning priorities and projects](#)

Open tenders:

[Current open tenders](#)

PHN grant opportunities:

Insert link to grants page

Contact for tenders and grants:

Phone: Xxxx

xxxx Email:

1.2 Role of Allied Health associations

Overview

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) comprise a diverse group of health practitioners that work across a wide range of health settings and client cohorts and draw on different areas of expertise and knowledge. AHPs support, diagnose and treat individuals drawing on a range of therapeutic approaches working both individually and as part of multidisciplinary teams.

A key focus for many AHPs is supporting clients who may have ongoing complex and chronic conditions such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, chronic pain associated with neuromusculoskeletal factors, mental illness and many other conditions. Many practitioners also work with children and young people experiencing developmental delay, neurodevelopmental disorders, or physical and intellectual disability.

These client cohorts often benefit from the support of a range of AHPs. For example, a client experiencing long-term chronic pain may draw on a mix of musculoskeletal supports, mental health- focused interventions, as well as diet and exercise- focused guidance drawn from a diverse group of AHPs.

The **Allied Health profession profiles** are resources that have been developed to support AHPs to better understand the role and scope of other professions. It will support AHPs to work effectively as part of multidisciplinary teams, and to support referral to other allied health services.

The resource is not a complete list of all allied health professions. It represents the most common professions that are working in the primary care sector, and those professions that responded to a request to be included. The profiles contain links to more detailed information on each profession.

If you would like your profession to be included in this resource, please contact: alliedhealth@thephn.com.au

Tools and resources

1	What Primary Health Networks do Describes the core functions of PHNs that are funded by the Dept of Health and Aged Care.	Allied Health Associations (multiple)
2	Overview of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners are unique professions within the health care system, with a combination of cultural intellect and primary health care training. They do not categorise themselves as AHPs, however they are aligned to primary health care and can play a key role in multidisciplinary teams. This overview provides more information about the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce.	National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP)

1.3 Role of Allied Health associations

Allied health associations and peak bodies represent and support their AHP members by providing a range of key services and functions. These include advocacy, continuing professional development, development of standards and guidelines as well as resources and support for practitioners. Many also help connect consumers and referrers with clinicians through directories.

Allied health associations include profession-specific organisations representing a single allied health profession, and organisations that work across disciplines. These include:

- Allied Professions Australia (AHPA), the national peak body for all AHPs
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce development to achieve better outcomes and change for communities
- Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH), a national member-based peak body who advocate on behalf of rural and
- Remote AHPs working in rural and remote communities.
- Allied health associations are a key resource for practitioners and all practitioners should be aware of the organisations that are working to represent their interests, raise public awareness about the role and value of AHPs, and support connections with other practitioners.

The list on the right provides links to the websites of key profession-specific and other allied health associations that practitioners may wish to explore.

Multi-profession peak associations	Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association
Allied Health Professions Australia	Australian Physiotherapy Association
Indigenous Allied Health Australia	National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists
Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health	Australian Podiatry Association
National Indigenous Health Leadership Alliance	Australian Psychological Society
Profession-specific peak association	Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association
Allied Health Assistants' National Association	Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy
Audiology Australia	Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors
Australasian Association and Register of Practicing Nutritionists	Chinese Medicine Board of Australia
Australasian Society of Genetic Counsellors	Chiropractic Australia
Australasian Sonographers Association	Dietitians Australia
Australian and New Zealand College of Perfusionists	Exercise and Sports Science Australia
Australian Association of Psychologists Inc	National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners
Australian Association of Social Workers	Occupational Therapy Australia
Australian Chiropractors Association	Optometry Australia
Australian Clinical Psychology Association	Osteopathy Australia
Australian College of Audiologists	Association of Orthoptists
Australian College of Mental Health Nurses	Podiatric Association of Australia
Australian Dental Association	Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
Association of Australian Diabetes Educators	Australia Pharmacy Guild of
Association of Australian Hand Therapy	Australia Professional Pharmacists
Association of Australian Music Therapy	Australia Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia
Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association	Speech Pathology Australia

1.4 Service Directories

Overview

Service directories specifically established for health professionals can greatly support AHPs in several ways. They can:

- Enable the identification of other local healthcare professionals, allowing for informed recommendations to patients about additional care options, including culturally safe referral pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients
- Enable AHPs to be recognised by other healthcare professionals for potential referral, fostering a network of collaboration and patient care
- Facilitate connections with local PHNs who may use service directories to identify local providers for inclusion in local initiatives and communications.

healthdirect's service finder, a nationally funded initiative, allows AHPs to easily locate and connect with other health services and professionals within their local area. This tool is crucial not only for health professionals but also for consumers and PHNs, as it ensures access to accurate and comprehensive information about available health services. Allied Health providers can register their organisation via the National Health Service Directory service desk. Provider Connect Australia further streamlines the registration process by maintaining up-to-date contact and service information across a number of Australian Government agencies including *healthdirect*. There is further information on Provider Connect in the Digital Health chapter of this Toolkit.

Profession-specific allied health associations also typically provide profession-specific service finders that allow consumers and referrers to identify practitioners, often with the ability to identify particular areas of practice.

'Find a Practitioner' links can be found through the [Allied Health profession profiles](#) included in this Toolkit.

Tools and resources

1	healthdirect service finder National directory of healthcare professionals and services.	Health Direct Australia
2	healthdirect service registration Registration form to register a health provider on the National Health Service Directory.	Health Direct Australia
3	Provider Connect Australia The most efficient way to register your practice on <i>healthdirect</i> is to register with Provider Connect Australia (PCA). PCA will update your practice details across the spectrum of Australian Government agencies (more detail in Digital Health Chapter).	Australian Digital Health Agency

1.5 Clinical Referral Pathways

Overview

HealthPathways is a free online health information portal designed to help primary care professionals manage their patient's medical conditions at the point of care, and plan care by providing information for when and how to refer patients to local specialists and services across the primary, acute and community systems.

Each PHN collaborates with their local health care system partners, including local health networks/districts to design condition-based HealthPathways that provide information on:

- assessing and managing patients for over 500 individual medical conditions
- referring patients to other health professionals, and services operating in the area, including any pre-referral requirements and contact details, supporting faster patient access to specialist care
- other educational resources and information for patients and clinicians to enable better self-management of health.

HealthPathways is managed and reviewed by PHNs, and local health providers and organizations operating in each PHN region. This ensures that the information listed is tailored to each region's context and local health requirements.

AHPs can access the *HealthPathways* portal online by requesting access from the local *HealthPathways* team in their PHN. Once registered, the portal allows AHPs to:

- Search for the patient's condition or suspected illness
- access symptom outlines and management options
- access information on how to refer patients to the most appropriate local services and specialist care
- access other clinical information as required

Tools and resources

1	Find your region's HealthPathways Community Provides links to your local HealthPathways site and direct contact to the PHN to request access.	<i>HealthPathways Community</i>
2	Case study: Using Clinical Referral Pathways in Community Pharmacy	<i>Hunter New England and Central Coast PHN</i>



Education and Networking

Chapter Contents

1. Role of PHNs in education and networking
2. Resources to support culturally safe and inclusive care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers
3. Resources to support culturally safe and inclusive care

2.1 Role of PHNs in education and networking

Overview

PHNs undertake a range of supporting activities aimed at improving the overall functioning of the primary health care system. Central to this role is facilitating education, networking and collaboration opportunities for health care professionals across the primary health care system.

Education and training

PHNs provide a range of education and training opportunities that focus on both general and clinical topics and support in primary health care, including cross sector education with local health care professionals that facilitates understanding of local clinical referral pathways. These include multidisciplinary educational events, workshops and webinars to support primary care professionals (including AHPs) to meet their continuing professional development (CPD) requirements. These also include cross-disciplinary discussions and peer learning programs, workshops on developing general business and professional skills, and understanding new and emerging health programs and using related digital health tools and systems.

The provision of general information and resources on important areas such as the mandatory and regulatory requirements for providing health services, recent changes to government health policies and legislation, accessing cultural awareness and safety training in primary care, and general business areas such as workforce recruitment and retention strategies.

Networking and collaboration

PHNs play a critical role in facilitating connections and collaboration across the primary health care system through face-to-face and virtual networking events, and established Communities of Practice. PHN networking activities are recognised by primary care professionals as highly effective platforms to:

- promote their business and service offerings to other health professionals
- better understand the broader health care system and local community health needs
- share experiences, lessons learned and knowledge across health settings to inform best practice approaches to health care and specific patient health concerns.

For AHPs, networking events can help build connections with other health professionals and encourage a better understanding of the critical role AHPs play in integrated models of health care.

2.2 Resources to support cultural safety and inclusive care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

Overview

Culturally safe practice that is free of racism is an essential foundation for allied health care that improves health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and supports greater health equity. All health practitioners should seek to understand cultural safety and its contribution to patient safety.

The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy group](#), led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, have developed a definition of cultural safety that has been endorsed by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the National Boards who regulate Australia's registered practitioners. That definition outlines that cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities and that culturally safe practice is the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in

delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism.

Culturally safe practice requires acknowledgement of key systemic and individual factors such as racism, biases, cultural and economic factors as well as the importance of self-determination and decision-making driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. The inclusion of cultural safety in the National Law and by professional bodies in professional standards are increasingly requiring AHPs to invest in and develop their ability to be culturally safe in their practice.

The resources included here are intended to support practitioners seeking to better understand cultural safety and to strengthen culturally safe practice. They include links to training options provided by Indigenous Allied Health Australia, leaders in cultural safety and responsiveness in allied health in Australia.

Tools and resources

1	HealthInfoNet Cultural Safety Portal for Health Professionals Provides access to a wide range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural safety publications, policies, resources, programs, organisations and workforce support information as well as content relevant to specific health professional disciplines.	Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet
2	Cultural Responsiveness Framework 2022 The Framework can be downloaded for free (upon request to IAHA) and provides information and support to prepare individuals and organisations to engage, learn, and build their capability to positively influence the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.	Indigenous Allied Health Australia
3	Cultural responsiveness training and development IAHA's training is centred on practical and sustainable approaches to cultural safety, targeted toward action and transformational change of individuals, organisations and services, to improve outcomes.	Indigenous Allied Health Australia
4	Communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders A Guide for communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which includes demonstrating understanding, building rapport, non-verbal communication, and providing options and ownership.	Queensland Health
5	Engaging with Remote Communities This site brings together the most effective ways to engage with people in a regional remote communities. The ideas, tools and information here come from a range of sources across Australia and overseas.	Bush Ready Northern Territory
6	WellMob Resources Resources for common wellbeing issues to use in health promotion and education with clients, carers and communities. The resources include videos, written information, podcasts, apps and websites.	WellMob
7	Working with the Stolen Generations Factsheet with information for primary care professionals to improve care services for Stolen Generations survivors.	Healing Foundation

2.3 Resources to support cultural safety and inclusive care

Overview

Providing safe services for all clients requires AHPs to understand and navigate the range of beliefs, values, and experiences that influence how consumers from different backgrounds perceive health and healthcare. By building knowledge and expertise about cultural differences, practitioners can ensure that they are able to provide inclusive care to all clients.

Being sensitive to the differences that may arise because of different cultural backgrounds allows practitioners to communicate effectively, build trust, and tailor their approaches to meet the specific needs of their patients. For instance, understanding cultural practices around diet, family roles, or traditional medicine can help practitioners offer more respectful and relevant advice, improving patient adherence to treatment and overall satisfaction with care. Additionally, recognising the unique challenges faced by people with disabilities, such as accessibility issues or the need for tailored

Communication methods, is crucial for providing comprehensive and inclusive care.

LGBTIQ+SB individuals may face distinct health challenges and barriers to accessing care, such as discrimination, lack of knowledgeable providers, or concerns about privacy. Practitioners who are informed about these issues and who create a welcoming environment can help mitigate these barriers, ensuring that LGBTIQ+SB patients receive appropriate and sensitive care. By fostering an inclusive approach, health practitioners not only enhance the quality of care but also contribute to reducing health disparities and improving outcomes for all patients.

The links provided here aim to assist AHPs in finding information to enhance inclusive practices. These resources and services are designed to be practical tools that practitioners can integrate into their daily work.



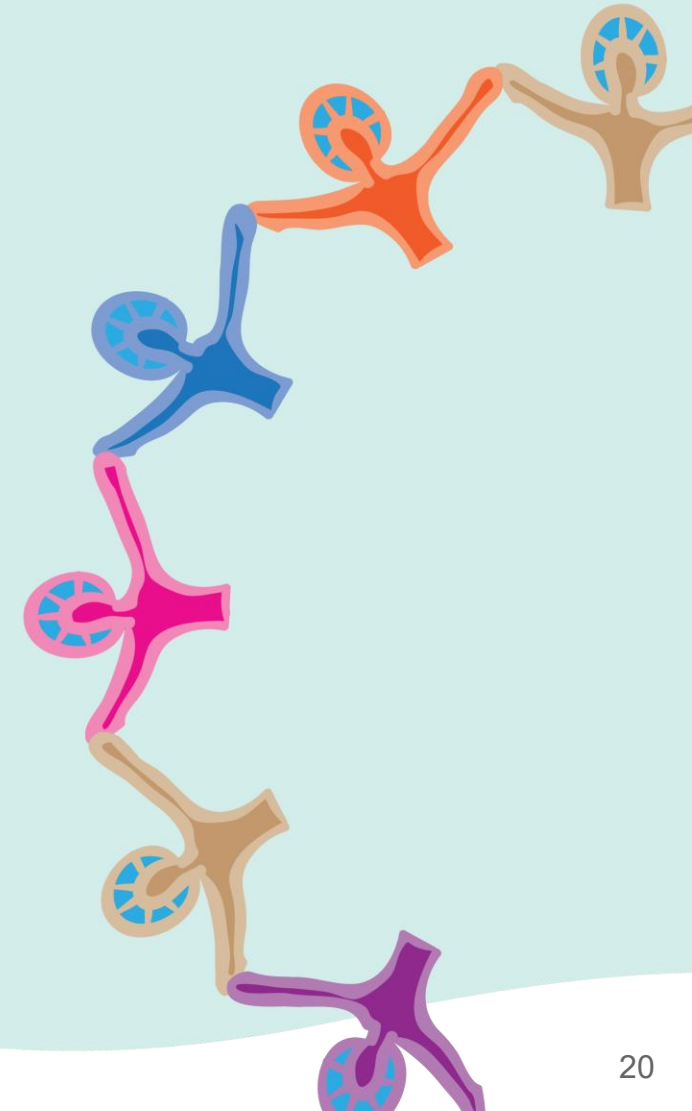
Tools and resources

1	<u>Key organisations for working with culturally and linguistically diverse families</u> This resource sheet is a directory of key organisations and resources for practitioners and service providers working with families and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.	<i>Australian Institute of Family Studies</i>
2	<u>Centre for Ethnicity & Health cultural competency training</u> Practical and specialist training to make your organisation, staff and systems more responsive to clients from migrants and refugee backgrounds. Free webinars and resources as well as pay for training resources. Check with your PHN whether they have purchased a license for service providers to access this training.	<i>Centre for Ethnicity & Health</i>
3	<u>Refugee Health Guide</u> Information for primary care professionals to inform on-arrival and ongoing health care for people from refugee backgrounds, including people seeking asylum.	<i>Refugee Health</i>
4	<u>Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)</u> Private AHPs can access interpreting services delivered by TIS National, including: immediate phone interpreting; Automated Telephone Interpreting Service (ATIS); pre-booked phone interpreting; on-site interpreting; video remote interpreting. Some local areas have free access to TIS.	<i>TIS National</i>
5	<u>Workforce Resources</u> Resources to support healthcare workers across LGBTIQ+SB health issues.	<i>LGBTIQ+ Health Australia</i>
6	<u>TransHub Information for Clinicians</u> Information for health professionals who are seeking to strengthen the clinical care they deliver to trans and gender diverse patients and clients.	<i>TransHub</i>
7	<u>My Allied Health Space</u> Provides information, tools and training resources to support the people with disability and complex support needs. While developed to support <i>Victorian Allied Health Capability Framework: disability and complex support needs</i> , the resource can be broadly applied by all allied health.	<i>My Allied Health Space</i>

Clinical Quality & Governance

Chapter Contents

1. Role of PHNs in supporting clinical quality
2. Data collection and evidence
3. National safety and quality standards
4. Utilising the Allied Health Assistant workforce



3.1 Role of PHNs in supporting clinical quality

Overview

PHNs play a pivotal role in supporting clinical quality improvement within the primary health care system, to improve the quality of care and outcomes for patients. PHNs offer a range of quality improvement tools, programs and strategies for specific clinical areas, support adoption of evidence-based practices, and measurement of impact. AHPs can actively engage with their PHN for clinical improvement through:

- **Participating in training and workshops:** PHNs offer training sessions, workshops and webinars focused on clinical improvement. Attending these can help you stay updated on best practices and new initiatives.
- **Joining collaborative projects:** Engaging in collaborative projects and quality improvement initiatives that often focus on specific health outcomes and provide opportunities to work alongside other primary care professionals.
- **Utilising resources and toolkits:** PHNs provide various resources, including quality improvement toolkits, guidelines and data analysis tools. Leveraging these resources can help implement evidence-based practices and measure performance effectively.
- **Engaging in data sharing and feedback:** Participate in data sharing initiatives and provide feedback on clinical outcomes. This supports PHNs to identify areas for improvement and develop targeted interventions.

3.2 Data collection and evidence base

Overview

AHPs and other health professionals are increasingly being asked by funders and consumers to use standardised tools to assess consumer needs and measure service outcomes.

The use of these tools and processes is an important foundation for person-centred and value-based care.

For those seeking to provide assessments for clients under funding programs such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or state and territory accident and compensation schemes, the use of accepted assessment tools is an important way of ensuring results will be accepted. The links on the right provide examples that practitioners can reference, however practitioners are encouraged to check with any health service funders or schemes that they work with for specific requirements.

The use of Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) and Patient Reported Outcome Measures

(PROMS) are leading practice approaches to understanding more about a person's experience of health services, their health status, functional abilities, experience and quality of life. These measures capture patients' perspectives on their own experiences with health conditions and treatments, the effectiveness of interventions, and their impact on day to day life.

For AHPs, PREMs and PROMs help assess client progress, identify areas that require adjustment in treatment plans, and ensure that care strategies align with client goals and preferences. This direct feedback is essential for delivering patient-centered care and making evidence-based decisions that enhance treatment outcomes. The links on the right are intended to provide a starting point for practitioners seeking to understand more about the use of PROMs and PREMs, as well as access to specific tools.

Tools and resources



1	<u>ACSQHC- Patient-reported outcomes measures</u> Provides information about PROMS, information for implementers, evidence and case studies.	<i>Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care</i>
2	<u>Patient reported measures</u> Video introduction to patient reported measures and using patient feedback to improve care.	<i>NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation</i>
3	<u>Australian Therapy Outcome Measures for Indigenous Clients (ATOMIC)</u> ATOMIC is a purpose designed tool for measuring therapy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.	<i>PubMed</i>
4	<u>Assessment tools for disability</u> List of assessment tools for different types of disability that are validated by NDIA.	<i>National Disability Insurance Agency</i>
5	<u>iCare (NSW) Assessment tools and resources</u> Used to monitor progress, quality of life and to guide decisions on the support needs of people with severe workplace or motor accident injuries.	<i>iCare (NSW)</i>
6	<i>Pending: PROM framework for PHN commissioning of MDTs</i>	<i>Department of Health And Aged Care</i>
7	<u>The fundamentals of patient satisfaction, PREMS and patient feedback</u> A summary of how these key measures work together to improve outcomes and experiences for patients, with a link to a <u>free webinar</u> .	<i>Patient Experience Agency</i>
8	<u>Patient Reported Experience Measure example questions</u> An example set of questions that can be used in a clinic setting.	<i>NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation</i>

3.3 Safety and quality standards

Overview

The National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare (NSQPCH) Standards were launched in 2021. They are applicable in all healthcare services that are directly involved in patient care in primary and/or community settings, including allied health services. The NSQPCH Standards are the first set of nationally consistent standards for primary and community health providers, and they aim to protect the public from harm and improve the quality of health care delivered.

The NSQPCH Standards are person-centred, and describe the processes and structures that are needed to deliver safe and high-quality health care. They cover clinical governance, partnering with consumers and clinical safety.

The NSQPCH Standards are voluntary. The way in which an individual service implements them will depend on its size and the risk and complexity of

services delivered. Accreditation is available through an independent assessment process. In some circumstances, a regulator or funder of a healthcare service may mandate accreditation to a particular standard. Accredited services will be able to display an accreditation badge, which demonstrates to the public that the service is committed to delivering and continuously improving safe and quality care.

In addition to the NSQPCH Standards, there are other safety and quality standards relevant to allied health professionals working in specific sectors, including:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Practice Standards
- The Aged Care Quality Standards
- The National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations (NSQMHCMO Standards).

Tools and resources

1	Supporting resources for the National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare (NSQPCH) Standards This page offers factsheets, advisories and guides to assist healthcare services to implement the Standards, including information on the accreditation process.	Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare
2	NDIS Practice Standards This document outlines the quality standards to be met by registered NDIS providers.	NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
3	Guidance and Resources for Providers to support the Aged Care Quality Standards This document is intended to assist organisations providing Commonwealth subsidised aged care services to implement and maintain their (mandatory) compliance with the Aged Care Quality Standards.	Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
4	NSQMHCMO Standards Guide for Service Providers This document is intended to support service providers to implement the National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations.	Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare
5	Safety and Quality Advice Centre This page provides contact details and information about the Safety and Quality Advice Centre, which offers support (via phone and email) to health services on the implementation of Standards under the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Scheme, including the NSQPCH Standards and the NSQMHCMO Standards.	Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare

3.4 Utilising the Allied Health Assistant workforce

Overview

Allied Health Assistants (AHAs) are well established as part of allied health teams in hospitals, aged care services and similar settings. They are also increasingly recognised as an important support for community-based private allied health services in areas such as disability support. AHAs can help increase the capacity and affordability of allied health services, and a growing number of allied health providers are employing AHAs to support their AHPs.

The Allied Health Assistants' National Association Ltd (AHANA), the national peak body for AHAs, defines an AHA as a healthcare worker who has demonstrated competencies to provide person-centred, evidence-informed therapy and support to individuals and groups under the delegation and supervision of an AHP. An AHA works within a defined scope of practice and in a variety of settings, with the level and type of supervision dependent on the AHA's competencies, capabilities and experience.

A range of resources have been developed to support AHPs to better understand the scope and capabilities of AHAs, and how they may be integrated into practice and service delivery models. AHPs need to know how and when to delegate services, how to provide appropriate supervision, and how to support the safe and effective growth of an AHA workforce.

The links on the right provide access to relevant resources and organisations with a focus on supporting increased use of AHAs. AHPs looking to find an AHA can draw on the register of AHAs maintained by AHANA, using the link provided.



Tools and resources

1	Resource guide to employing an Allied Health Assistant Provides practice guides and frameworks and published research to support the successful integration of AHAs into the Allied Health system.	AHP Workforce
2	Allied Health Assistant Framework This Framework aims to assist AHPs and service managers to understand the roles and scope of practice of the allied health assistant health workforce.	Office of the Chief Allied Health Officer Clinical Excellence Queensland
3	Improving patient care with your Allied Health Assistants A short video introduction on Allied Health Assistants in community practice, and a recorded webinar with Q&A with practice managers and AHAs.	Hunter New England & Central Coast PHN
4 \$	Allied Health Assistants Model of Care SARRAH has developed an online self-guided course for Allied Health managers, practice owners, and AHPs who are looking to increase capacity by employing Allied Health Assistants. The course is designed to support articulation and implementation of the model of care.	Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
5	Register of Allied Health Assistants List of AHANA Practising Members who have opted to have their details available in the Register.	Allied Health Assistants' National Association



Business Efficiency & Funding Sources

Chapter Contents

1. PHN service provider opportunities
2. Other government funding schemes
3. Support for small businesses

4.1 PHN service provider opportunities

Overview

The primary role of PHNs is to identify the population health needs of their local community and commission primary care providers, including AHPs, to provide innovative service delivery models and integrated care initiatives to meet these health needs.

PHNs engage service providers by two mechanisms:

- **Commissioning** – It encompasses the end-to-end, ongoing process of identifying population health needs, planning and designing services, procuring services, monitoring service performance and evaluating outcomes. These funding opportunities include targeted programs addressing specific health needs such as chronic disease management, mental health support and preventive care. There are often opportunities for AHPs to join larger provider consortia or form partnerships to provide allied health expertise to commissioned services. AHPs can view and respond to available commissioning opportunities through their local PHN's website, and online tendering portals administered by individual PHNs (see TenderLink resource).
- **Grants** – Grants are (typically) one-time, short-term opportunities aimed at primary care professionals to increase the capacity and capability of their workforce, improve internal systems and processes, and deliver innovative community health programs. Current grant opportunities are listed on PHN websites and can be applied for online. Commissioning and grant programs provide AHPs opportunities to expand their services, engage in multidisciplinary teams, and contribute to the development of tailored health interventions that meet local population needs. Engaging with PHNs can foster professional growth but also ensures that high-quality, accessible healthcare is available to all community members.

PHNs have developed a range of resources (such as video tutorials, webinars, and 'how to' guides) to support providers to respond to PHN commissioning and grant opportunities.

Tools and resources

➡	1	Commissioning overview in the PHN context Information from the Department of Health and Aged Care about what commissioning is and how it works.	Department of Health and Aged Care
	2	Help - Tenderlink How it works, video tutorials and glossary.	Tenderlink
	3	How do I tender? A series of webinars to explain the tendering process and help you to prepare a competitive tender response. While these resources were developed for the Hunter New England and Central Coast PHN region, they are relevant and applicable more broadly.	Hunter New England & Central Coast PHN
	4	Tender Toolbox Guided information to support you in responding to the common components of a PHN tender.	Gippsland PHN

4.2 National health, aged care and disability funding schemes

Overview

While other primary care professions typically provide most of their services under a single government funding program, i.e.. Medicare, AHPs typically draw on a much wider range of funding programs to support patient access and a sustainable practice. AHPs are potentially eligible to provide services under Medicare, Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) funding, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), as well as community and residential aged care funding programs.

These programs can be an important means of supporting consumers to access allied health services.

To provide services under any of these programs, AHPs will need to first review eligibility requirements and determine whether registration is required. For example, to be eligible for Medicare rebates or DVA funding, AHPs must first register to be a Medicare provider. If seeking to provide NDIS services, AHPs may also need to be registered with the NDIS Commission. New registration requirements are being introduced for any providers seeking to deliver services funded under community and residential aged care funding. In some cases, costs may be associated with registration.

The links to resources provide a starting point for AHPs seeking information about program eligibility requirements, fee schedules and guidance on how to register (where required). Navigating the range of requirements and funding options can be challenging, particularly for those providers establishing businesses for the first time or in new areas of practice. Allied health professional associations are a great resource for anyone seeking profession-specific guidance and can be found by searching the links provided separately in this toolkit.

Tools and resources

1	MBS eligibility for health professionals Information from Services Australia on eligibility of health professionals to claim Medicare benefits, including a drop-down menu for AHPs.	Services Australia
2	AskMBS advice for Allied Health professionals Provides responses to the most frequently asked questions on MBS billing rules for allied health MBS items, including chronic disease management plans, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health assessments, group allied health services, and services in residential aged care homes.	Department of Health and Aged Care
3	Guide to Medicare for Indigenous health services A guide to services, including the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR), My Health Record and Indigenous-specific MBS services.	Services Australia
4	MBS Online Online search tool via MBS item number or descriptions. It provides full description and notes on the use of the MBS items.	Department of Health and Aged Care
5	Understanding Medicare: Provider Handbook Handbook designed to help healthcare professionals understand and navigate the Medicare system. It includes guidance on a range of topics and is intended to help build a fundamental knowledge of Medicare functions and principles.	Department of Health and Aged Care
6	Becoming an NDIS provider Provides a readiness checklist to outline what is involved in becoming a registered provider and the steps to begin the registration process. The Provider Information pack offers NDIS providers key information to support the provision of NDIS services.	National Disability Insurance Service
7	NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits (previously the NDIS Price Guide). The Arrangements assist participants and disability support providers in understanding how price controls for supports and services work in the NDIS.	National Disability Insurance Service
8	Information for treating patients with a DVA card Fees, guidelines and profession specific information for professionals treating patients claiming via Department of Veteran's Affairs.	Department of Veterans Affairs
9	Aged care regulatory model Introduction to the features of the new aged care regulatory model and new 'universal' provider registration requirements and process.	Department of Health and Aged Care

4.3 Accreditation and working with state- based insurance schemes

Overview

Each state and territory operates its own workers compensation and motor accident insurance scheme. These schemes are designed to provide financial and medical support to individuals who have been injured at work or in motor vehicle accidents. The primary goal is to facilitate recovery and return to work or daily activities of those impacted by motor vehicle accidents.

AHPs are key providers of services funded by accident and compensation schemes. However, to provide services, AHPs may be required to meet specific registration requirements. The general steps involved include:

- **Meet qualification standards:** Have the necessary qualifications and be registered with AHPRA or relevant professional body.
- **Complete required training:** Some states require AHPs to complete specific training programs. For example, in NSW, practitioners must complete the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) online training program.
- **Apply for approval and provider number:** Submit an application to the relevant state authority. This may involve providing evidence of qualifications, training completion, and professional registration.

- **Understand guidelines and legislation:** Become familiar with the guidelines and legislation governing the schemes in your state. For instance, in NSW, the Workers Compensation Act 1987 and the Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998 outline the requirements and responsibilities for practitioners.

Working Within the Schemes

Once registered, AHPs will be part of a multidisciplinary team focused on the injured individual's recovery. Here are some key components to keep in mind:

- **Collaborative care:** Work closely with other primary care professionals, employers, insurers, and rehabilitation professionals to develop and implement effective treatment plans.
- **Evidence-based practice:** Provide treatments that are supported by research and best practice guidelines to ensure optimal outcomes for your patients.
- **Billing and documentation:** Adhere to the billing and documentation requirements specific to your state's scheme. Accurate and timely documentation is crucial for the smooth processing of claims and payments.

Tools and resources

1	Clinical Framework For the Delivery of Health Services The Clinical Framework outlines a set of guiding principles for the delivery of health services and is supported by all Commonwealth and state and territory work cover and accident insurance schemes.	Australian Government ComCare
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4.3 Accreditation and working with state-based insurance schemes

Queensland

1	<u>Work Safe Queensland Provider Information</u> Information on getting started, including guides on how to become an approved provider and registered with WorkSafe QLD.	<i>Work Safe Qld</i>
2	<u>Becoming a service provider for Qld MAIC</u> Explains the application process and ongoing requirements, including approval criteria and conditions of accreditation.	<i>Qld Motor Accident Insurance Commission</i>

4.4 Support for small business

Overview

Getting started as a private allied health provider and staying viable as a small business is not always easy. AHPs are experts at providing clinical services in their area of practice but may have less experience and training in relation to establishing and running a business.

The Commonwealth and individual state and territory governments offer a range of resources and services including business and tax information, guidance about how to advertise services, as well as grants that providers may be eligible for to help establish or expand their services. For providers in rural areas or considering establishing services in rural areas, the Rural Workforce Agency offers support and grant programs in each state and territory.

Many allied health professional associations also offer private practice toolkits that provide profession-specific guidance and resources to help providers set up businesses, develop policies and documentation, choose appropriate insurance coverage, and market their services. These resources may require membership with your individual professional association and may have additional costs. Check with your professional association to find out more about what is available.

Links to individual [professional association](#) websites can be found elsewhere in this Toolkit.

Tools and resources



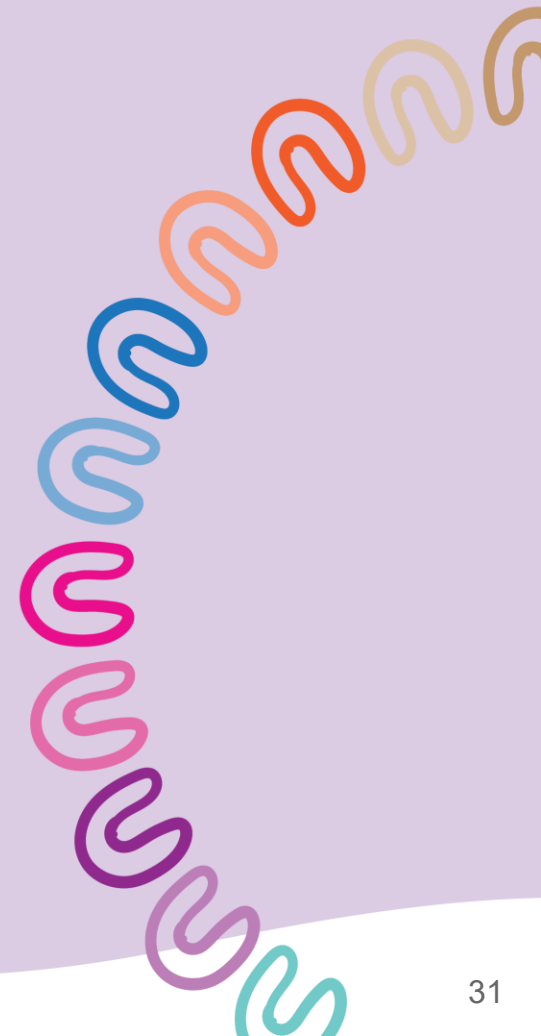
1	Support for businesses in Australia Information, grants, and services from across government to help your business succeed.	<i>Australian Government</i>
2	Small business benchmarks The ATO publishes small business benchmarks, which allow you to compare your small business against other, similar businesses in your industry. The benchmarks may help you to identify opportunities to grow your business. There are also links to relevant courses for small businesses.	<i>Australian Tax Office</i>
3	Advertising health services Summary of the AHPRA advertising requirements, obligations and who they apply to. It also includes further links to more information.	<i>Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency</i>
4	Supporting your small business Tax time essentials, learning resources, tools and services to support small business.	<i>Australian Tax Office</i>
5	Rural Workforce Agency The Rural Workforce Agency in each state aims to improve the capacity, quality and distribution of the health workforce. It delivers a range of Commonwealth funded programs, grants and subsidies.	<i>Rural Workforce Agency</i>



Digital health and information systems

Chapter Contents

1. Role of PHNs in supporting digital health
2. National digital health platforms
3. Communications systems: secure messaging and eReferrals
4. Telehealth and other digital resources



5.1 Role of PHNs in supporting digital health

Overview

PHNs play a crucial role in **raising awareness** of digital health across their regions to achieve greater efficiency in healthcare delivery and better health outcomes for consumers. They act as intermediaries, providing **essential resources, training, and support** to ensure that AHPs can effectively utilise digital health tools such as:

- My Health Record
- Provider Connect Australia
- Secure messaging and e-Referrals
- Telehealth
- Electronic prescriptions

PHNs collaborate with the Australian Digital Health Agency (Agency) on initiatives and awareness raising efforts with national digital health strategies, further enhancing the quality, accessibility, and coordination of healthcare services across the region.

PHNs **facilitate the implementation** of these technologies by offering guidance on best practices, assisting with technical challenges, and promoting the benefits of digital health to improve patient care. Additionally, they work closely with primary care professionals and vendors to identify and potentially tailor digital health solutions - such as secure messaging and eReferrals - to meet the specific needs of their communities.

National digital health pathway for Allied Health

The **Australian Digital Health Agency (Agency)** is committed to advancing a program of digital health adoption, with a primary focus on implementing a comprehensive digital health plan for AHPs.

Central to this plan are the integration of My Health Record (MHR) with allied health practice software, and the promotion and utilisation of the Provider Connect Australia (PCA) system and electronic prescribing services. By actively collaborating with vendors of allied health practice software to ensure My Health Record conformance, the Agency is driving the adoption of these critical digital health tools.

The agency continues to make significant progress in engaging vendors, health service providers, and businesses with its platforms, fostering a more interconnected and efficient healthcare system.

With this growing momentum and focus, the landscape for the allied health system is set to improve in the coming years, making it an opportune time for practitioners to engage and integrate with these digital health initiatives.

5.2 National digital health platforms

Overview

The Australian Digital Health Agency has a program of initiatives to improve the connectivity of the health care system to make it more accessible, progressive and secure.

The key platforms for Allied Health to engage with include:

- **My Health Record** is a secure online summary of key patient health information that providers can access and view. If providers have access to conformant software, they can also add information. The checklist at resource 2 contains all the steps and information required to register yourself and your practice with My Health Record.
- **National Provider Portal** is a web-based portal that enables health professionals who do not have software conformant with My Health Record to still view it.
- **Provider Connect Australia** is a single place to update your business information, updating funders, directories and communication services in one single step. Provider Connect can automatically send updates to your connected business partners, which include PHNs, National Health Service Directory, public health services such as eHealth NSW, and secure messaging services.
- **Electronic prescriptions** support secure and efficient access to medicine supply for Australians – sent directly to the patient's mobile phone number or email.

To register with these platforms, you will need a PRODA (Provider Digital Access) account. This is an online authentication system used to securely provide access to government online services. Healthcare Identifiers for individual professionals and healthcare organisations are also required. The links provided on the right offer guidance and support for establishing these accounts.

Tools and resources

➡ 1	Introduction to My Health Record for Allied Health An introduction to My Health Record and its benefits, with links to support for Implementing My Health Record in your organisation .	Australian Digital Health Agency
2	Checklist to support registering and using My Health Record Checklist with instructions on how to connect to My Health Record as a health care professional. It includes registering for Healthcare Identifiers, and policy templates.	Australian Digital Health Agency
3	Implementing My Health Record – training & education resources Resources developed specifically for Allied Health providers on the key components of establishing and using My Health Record.	Australian Digital Health Agency
4	National Provider Portal Enables AHPs to access and view My Health Record system without conformant clinical software (login required).	Australian Digital Health Agency
5	Provider Connect Australia Steps for registering with PCA and instructions on how to create a PRODA account.	Australian Digital Health Agency
6	The Digital Adoption Support Team at the Digital Health Agency is available to support AHPs to connect to PCA, the National Provider Portal and My Health Record. Call 02 6223 0741, or contact your local PHN Digital Health Team.	Australian Digital Health Agency
7	AHPA Digital Health Toolkit Supports the use and understanding of digital health platforms and provides practical clinical case studies to illustrate their use in the practice setting.	Allied Health Professions Australia
8	Electronic prescription - Training Resources An overview of and introduction to using electronic prescription tokens, and the benefits for the consumer.	Australian Digital Health Agency

5.3 Communications systems: secure messaging and eReferrals

Overview

Health care systems are increasingly adopting software to enable the sharing of health information digitally between healthcare professionals across primary, acute and community care systems. These are commonly referred to as secure messaging and e-referral systems. This information can include coordinated care plans, referrals, discharge summaries, specialist letters, pathology and diagnostic images. The advantages of these systems include:

- Patient data being appropriately and securely managed
- Improved clinical decisions, through having information available at point of care
- Access to broader range of referring practitioners through online directories
- Referral templates that ensure all the correct clinical and demographic information is included, to prevent delays in reviewing and clinical decision making
- Improved coordination of care, through improved communication between providers

Secure messaging platforms provide the most streamlined experience when they are built into, or compatible with, your existing clinical information systems. Compatibility with your system makes it easier to auto-fill referral templates and attach supporting information. However, if this is not possible with your practice system, you can still access either web portals or Microsoft Word plug-in options which allow you to send and receive secure electronic messages. The resources on the right provide guidance to help you better understand how secure messaging works and how to get started.

Please note: currently both senders and recipients of documents exchanged via secure message and e-referral must use the same secure messaging program due to the encryption methods used.

Ask your PHN: What are the dominant secure messaging and e-referral systems that providers and referrers in the local health care system are using?

Tools and resources



1	What is secure messaging A factsheet explaining what secure messaging is, how it works and why it should be implemented.	<i>Australian Digital Health Agency</i>
2	Connection guide for secure messaging This includes information on the key features of secure messaging systems, as well as information on available products, to help you select the most suitable option to meet requirements.	<i>Allied Health Professions Australia</i>
3	Secure messaging user guide A generalised guide for drafting, sending and receiving secure messages in your clinical practice system.	<i>Australian Digital Health Agency</i>

5.4 Telehealth and other digital resources

Overview

Many AHPs and the consumers they support used telehealth to support care delivery during COVID-19 lockdowns. Practitioners now have an opportunity to sustain and embed its use in the day-to-day delivery of care as a way of supporting accessibility and convenience for patients. The use of telehealth is particularly beneficial for those with mobility issues, chronic conditions, and those living in residential care settings or remote areas.

Allied Health practices of all sizes and scopes can engage with telehealth platforms. To use telehealth effectively, providers should:

- Have the right digital infrastructure, including a telehealth platform that maintains patient privacy, is simple to use for patients, and supports the clinic environment
- Adjust processes for preparing and following up after an appointment to streamline and manage clinical risks and documentation and billing requirements
- Adjust communication styles for the virtual environment and to get the most out of a virtual consultation
- Establish models of care that are specialty specific and tailored to patient needs.

When using telehealth, practitioners should incorporate cultural safety in their telehealth approach by avoiding assumptions about access to technology (or private spaces for appointments), allowing time for building relationships, communicating effectively, working with local support people, and understanding that telehealth won't suit everyone.

Digital Health assessment tools are useful resources to support practices in determining how to implement these technologies and the capabilities the workforce will require for successful implementation.

Tools and resources

➡ 1	<u>healthdirect video call platform</u> Telehealth platform which is provided at no cost to Allied Health. It has been customised to the needs of health professionals, including by offering virtual waiting areas.	healthdirect Australia
2	<u>AHPA Telehealth Guide</u> A comprehensive guide that covers safety and quality, getting started and knowing the limitations of telehealth as well as preparing and conducting a consultation and follow up activities, including documentation and billing.	Allied Health Professions Australia
3	<u>Telehealth decision support tool</u> Tool designed to guide clinicians to make decisions in partnership with consumers about the appropriate use of telehealth for providing care.	Safer Care Victoria
4	<u>Telehealth Training Portal</u> Topics covered include online communication, service development, models of care, and allied health profession-specific information. There is a cost for these courses. 💰	University of Qld – Centre for Online Health
5	<u>Assess your digital health capability</u> This Tool will help you determine your workforce's current level of capability across a broad range of digital health areas. The results can be used as a guide to determine areas for further development.	Australasian Institute of Digital Health
6	<u>Digital health assessment and planning tool</u> The tool is intended to help allied health providers to first assess whether particular technologies are relevant for their practice and patients, and to then access a range of resources, including training and connection guides, to help them implement these within their practice.	Allied Health Professions Australia

Overview of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce

What is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner?

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners are two distinct but related professions specialising in the provision of culturally safe, responsive and holistic primary health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The workforce was established by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in response to the need for geographically accessible and culturally safe healthcare.

When should I refer to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner?

Where possible Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners should be used to support the delivery of most health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With cultural intellect and primary health care training, they help to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people connected to and engaged in the health care system.

What do Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners do?

Depending on level of qualification, experience, and workplace setting they are able to work independently or under supervision as part of multidisciplinary health care teams. They act as health system navigators, deliver culturally safe care, play a role in early intervention and prevention, improve access to health care services and the patient experience and, if enabled to do so, work competently and professionally to deliver culturally safe primary health care services across a broad range of settings.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners are primarily employed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled and Government hospitals and health services.

How are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners qualified?

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners are VET trained.

An *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker* has a Certificate II or higher in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care, noting the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker training package enables completion of qualifications up to advanced diploma level.

An *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner* has a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice and must be registered with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia within Ahpra.

Tools and resources

1	Find out more about the professional scopes of practice of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners here This document outlines professional scopes of practice, and includes case studies as well as role and capability templates. These templates can be used to develop and review role descriptions, assess opportunities to work to professional scope of practice, and assess capability.	National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP)
2	Find out more about the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce and NAATSIHWP here NAATSIHWP is the only peak workforce organisation with responsibility for ensuring Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners are embedded as a vital, valued and professional part of Australia's healthcare system. The website includes information about NAATSIHWP's role and activities, a resources hub and information on upcoming events.	National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP)

Case study: Using clinical referral pathways in community pharmacy

As a community pharmacist I find our local clinical referral pathways site useful in my daily work with many services provided in the pharmacy including vaccinations, managing a range of conditions, providing and dispensing medications and counselling patients in quality use of medicines.

When providing a blood pressure check to a customer, I will use the hypertension clinical referral pathway if I get a high blood pressure result. This pathway will reassure me whether I should take immediate action and give advice to receive immediate care or if the patient needs to see their GP at a later date.

The breastfeeding suite of the clinical referral pathways site gives clear advice for both drug and non-drug management of mastitis and a range of other conditions affecting lactating parents which gives me confidence to know I can give evidence-based advice and care that is updated regularly when customers present in pharmacy with issues such as mastitis.

All the clinical pages on our local clinical referral pathways site also have a section containing evidence-based and up-to-date patient information resources that I can provide to customers with the knowledge that these accurately reflect the information provided to clinicians in the pathway.

The local clinical referral pathways contain primary, secondary and tertiary referral points for a broad range of speciality areas which I use

frequently to refer patients to other appropriate services such as community based mental health support, drug and alcohol services and dementia support services.

Since the scope of practice for pharmacists expanded to include vaccinations, these pathways have been very useful to assess and manage patients and find the vaccination information I require to provide these services and I know I am providing current evidence-based advice to my patients.

I often use our local clinical referral pathways site when patients present to the pharmacy with common medical issues such as constipation, breastfeeding, vaccinations, reflux or acne. It helps me to know how to assess and manage patients and to know when to refer to a GP.

I have even used the needle stick injury pathway for my own health advice while administering vaccinations which gave me clear and concise guidance on managing the situation safely and according to best practice care!

For other allied health clinicians, being listed on clinical referral pathway pages can help raise awareness of your practice, let other primary care clinicians know more about the services you provide and improve the quality of referrals you receive.

I always have our local clinical referral pathways site open on my desktop in the pharmacy and find it an extremely useful tool!



Overview of Allied Health Professions

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network

Torres and Cape | Cairns | Townsville | Mackay







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