

## Communiqué

### Rural Digital Health Workshop: 8 November 2019

NBN and the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) co-hosted a Rural Digital Health Workshop on 8 November 2019 at the NBN Discovery Centre, Sydney. The Workshop was attended by representatives of the rural health sector including practitioners and consumers, as well as researchers and policymakers interested in digital technology and its application to health care. Participants at the Workshop also heard from the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, and Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer, Regional & Remote at NBN, as well as a number of case studies from consumers and practitioners.

#### KEY THEMES

Participants at the workshop undertook facilitated group work, including a SWOT analysis, to identify the barriers and enablers to participation in digital health. Some of the themes emerging from the discussion were:

- The need to improve connectivity in many parts of rural and remote Australia, including speed and reliability;
- The need to make services affordable and accessible for all;
- The importance of funding mechanisms to ensure that health professionals can deliver digital health services in rural and remote areas;
- Education and training for the health workforce to ensure that they are familiar with technology used to deliver digital health services;
- Digital literacy for consumers, coupled with health literacy and English proficiency;
- Data security;
- Interoperability of systems; and
- How people and organisations that are active in the rural digital health space can better work together in order to effect policy change.

#### NEXT STEPS

Participants agreed to work together to establish a national coordinated approach for the delivery of a range of equitably applied rural digital health services, systems and tools with interoperability; incorporating digital literacy, connectivity and funding mechanisms.

The NRHA will lead the process of establishing four working groups to facilitate more detailed discussion about some of the themes raised at this workshop. The working groups will focus on:

- Digital literacy;
- Connectivity;
- Funding; and
- Interoperability