



Media release

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Gurriny Yealamucka connects Yarrabah community with technology for better healthcare

In the 1980s, when community members at Yarrabah in far north Queensland were fighting for self-determination, they saw the need for Aboriginal health to be in the hands of their own people and the concept of a community-controlled health organisation was born.

Today, Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service delivers primary healthcare across the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire and has been doing so for decades.

To mark the *International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples* on 9 August, the Australian Digital Health Agency has used a series of videos to recognise Gurriny Yealamucka and the Yarrabah community for embracing innovation and the use of technology to deliver better healthcare.

Gurriny Yealamucka means 'good healing water' in the language of the Gunggandji Peoples of Yarrabah.

The Gunggandji peoples are the traditional owners of Yarrabah and they and the historical peoples of Yarrabah, who were brought there as part of the Stolen Generations and have built Yarrabah into what it is today.

This includes the development of a remarkable and resilient healthcare service that moved to digital healthcare in 2014.

Director of Clinical Services at Gurriny Yealamucka, a Yued Noongar man from Dandaragan WA, Dr Jason King said one of the fascinating things about Aboriginal culture is that information about the world around them has always been evolving and so communities, almost by second nature, understand the importance of transmitting information from one generation to the next.

"For thousands of years, they've been custodians of data and in the 21st Century, with digital health tools at their fingertips, Aboriginal communities have the opportunity to extend their ability to be owners of their own health care," he said.

Dr King said My Health Record, with a centralised set of tools, puts Aboriginal people into the conversation about their health in a much more empowered way.

"One of the most important things in providing safe healthcare is having consistent information and for the patient who might not understand all of their medications, having that safe and secure central source of information in their My Health Record is really a massive guarantee for them," he said.

"One of the great challenges of working in a place like Yarrabah is that our patients often have complex and complicated health problems and they see quite a lot of other health providers. Digital health tools help us gather that information from all those different sources and when we get that into My Health Record, that story is there for the healthcare team to see."

"When that information is shared appropriately, it means you as the clinician don't have to waste the patient's time in asking them for their health and medication history."

Gurriny Yealamucka uses telehealth extensively, connecting to specialists and allied health in Cairns, Townsville or Brisbane, so their patients don't need to leave the community unnecessarily to access those essential services.



Gurriny Yealamucka looks at their patients' spiritual and cultural health, the health of their country and how that impacts on them as a person.

"A good set of digital health tools allows you to get closer together so the doctor and patient can be speaking the same language," Dr King said.

"Communication really relies on technology in the 21st century and now with electronic records, you have a tool you can leverage to improve care of the patient."

Australian Digital Health Agency CEO Amanda Cattermole said Gurriny Yealamucka and other Aboriginal community-controlled health services around the country were leading the way in uptake of digital innovation to enhance healthcare.

"I congratulate Gurriny Yealamucka for the significant work they are doing to bring health technology to their patients. It is the continuing work of the ADHA to ensure that the My Health Record System is and continues to be a strong enabling support for better, more connected healthcare," she said.

Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer Regional and Remote, and First Peoples Pillar Executive Sponsor, at nbn said that advances in technology are helping improve health outcomes across Australia.

"Access to reliable internet services has enabled more people, no matter where they live, to access to both primary and specialist care sooner," he said. "This delivers big benefits including better health management and reducing the cost and time of travelling to appointments.

"We are working with regional and remote communities across Australia to ensure providers and patients understand the connectivity they have available to participate in telehealth and virtual care more broadly. We're also focussed on driving digital inclusion, so people have the tools and skills to get the best out of what telehealth has to offer."

Gurriny Yealamucka is a member of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC).

Watch the videos here:

Connecting communities in Far North Queensland to better healthcare

https://youtu.be/Jciqbt_eTZg

Digital Bytes

<https://youtu.be/iHU-urBux30>

<https://youtu.be/gzeC7SXywNE>

<https://youtu.be/-ROgu4n7gEc>

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About the Australian Digital Health Agency

When it comes to improving the health of all Australians, the role of digital innovation and connection is a vital part of a modern, accessible healthcare system. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, digital health has seen exponential growth in relevance and importance, making it more pertinent than ever for all Australians and healthcare providers.



Better patient healthcare and health outcomes are possible when you have a health infrastructure that can be safely accessed, easily used and responsibly shared.

To achieve this, the [National Digital Health Strategy](#) is establishing the foundations for a sustainable health system that constantly improves. It underpins and coordinates work that is already happening between governments, healthcare providers, consumers, innovators and the technology industry.

For further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.

The Australian Digital Health Agency is a statutory authority in the form of a corporate Commonwealth entity.