

Submission to the National Preventative Health taskforce

# National Preventative Health Strategy

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Technology & Engineering

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# NATIONAL PREVENTATIVE HEALTH STRATEGY

Thank you for consulting on the National Preventative Health Strategy, ATSE<sup>1</sup> welcomes the development of this roadmap to shifting Australia's health system to focus on prevention and wellness in the decade to 2030. ATSE strongly agrees that health is a collective and interconnected effort, and that the focus of Australia's health system should be prevention and equity of access and health outcomes.

ATSE recently completed a major project on how technology can underpin this shift – I attach a copy of the full report and further information can also be found on our website.<sup>2</sup>This report is part of a major research project, supported by the Australian Research Council, identifying research and policy priorities for technology readiness in Australian industry. The series of reports aim to develop a decadal roadmap for Australian industry to maintain currency and fully integrate new technologies to maximise economic advantage. The project is also highlighting research priorities to guide decisions and ensure investment is appropriately focused to promote Australian industry competitiveness.

Our research and analysis were underpinned by consultations with over 200 leaders from the sector, including industry, private and public health, government and research. The most critical priority for technology in the healthcare system was clearly the digitisation of health records – without a shift to electronic records, the fragmented healthcare system will not cope with increased volumes of data and the emergence of digital technologies, nor with the increasing personalisation of healthcare. Integrated care will be unachievable without electronic health records, which are essential for efficient, accurate, timely and patient-centred care.

Embracing new technologies will also be vital in ensuring that the benefits of a wellness system are available in regional areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and to disadvantaged people in urban communities. Barriers to equitable outcomes include distance, communication difficulties, financial resources, education levels, accessibility, and shortages of healthcare workers. Mobile and telehealth services can easily and inexpensively help Australians overcome these obstacles and access the best available care in a timely way.

Empowering the workforce to maximise the benefits from new healthcare, data and communications technologies will result in increased efficiency, better decision-making and improved outcomes. The workforce must be supported in its transition to a focus on prevention and wellness, particularly developing skills to adapt to a technology-driven workplace.

Finally, the research sector needs a boost to provide the healthcare system with the tools it needs and ensure a robust return on investment. Despite generous government support, Australia's position as a world leader in health technology research is at odds with its poor translation and commercialisation record, indicating a system failure. Government has a responsibility to ensure that there is support for – and a clear path to develop – timely, cost-effective and commercially successful products from initial research outcomes.

ATSE would be pleased to provide further information, evidence or host a briefing with our expert working group of ATSE Fellows if that would be of assistance in the development of the strategy. Please feel welcome to contact us to discuss ATSE's report or the strategy at any time.

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering is a Learned Academy of independent, non-political experts helping Australians understand and use technology to solve complex problems. Bringing together Australia's leading thinkers in applied science, technology and engineering, ATSE provides impartial, practical and evidence-based advice on how to achieve sustainable solutions and advance prosperity

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.atse.org.au/research-and-policy/big-issues/helping-australia-get-technology-ready/health-technology-report/>