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**Purpose of the Virtual Care Strategy** 



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Appendix





#### What does 'Virtual Care' mean?

Virtual care is a broad term that refers to digitally enabled healthcare delivery that supports Territorians to receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time. The statement below has guided the development of this Virtual Care Strategy ("the Strategy").

Virtual care can support care delivery across the entire consumer journey, including prevention and wellness, home care, primary care and hospital care.

Virtual care models bring people, processes and technology together to ensure healthcare delivery is safe, responsive and kind.

Virtual care enhances existing models of care across
the care continuum, through a broad range of
technology enablers and supporting systems. Virtual care
can help meet the needs of Territorians
by optimising access and quality of consumer care.

There are a breadth of virtual care technology enablers that may be applied to care models.

These include telehealth, remote monitoring devices and mobile applications.

Virtual care technologies can support consumers, families, communities, and clinicians through greater access to care and support services.

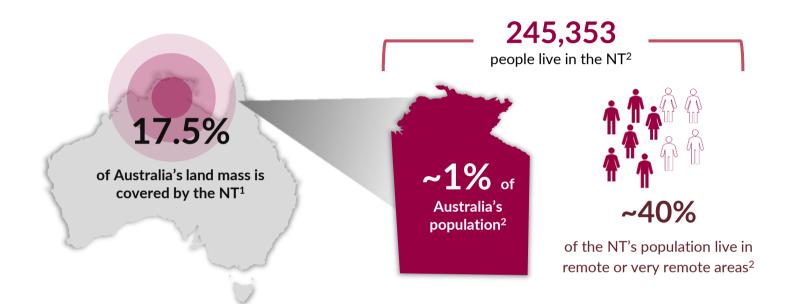
Virtual care can improve Territorians' access to and quality of care by delivering care which does not discriminate based on location. It also provides Territorians with a choice on how they want to receive care.



# The Northern Territory has been an early adopter of virtual care, and use has accelerated in response to COVID-19

The Northern Territory (NT) has a long history with virtual care, having been an early adopter of telehealth and other technology enablers of remote care. During COVID-19, the use of virtual care accelerated even further. One influencing factor for this focus on virtual care is the NT's significant challenges to accessibility and delivery of healthcare due to its vast geographical spread, small population, seasonal weather restrictions and limited number of urban centres.

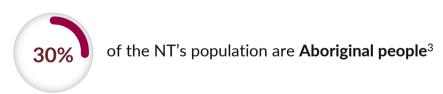
This Strategy will guide how virtual care will be used by NT Health to compliment, elevate and extend traditional healthcare delivery models to cater for and increase accessibility for all Territorians no matter where they live, work and play in the NT.



The NT's population also has the lowest health outcomes in Australia, high levels of social disadvantage and many live with the burden of chronic disease.<sup>4</sup> These circumstances are critical when considering the benefits and risks associated with the NT's virtual care journey.

The NT's young Aboriginal population is growing, while its non-Aboriginal population is ageing and often transient<sup>4</sup>







The NT has the **highest premature death rate** across
the national population<sup>4</sup>



The NT is witnessing an increasing prevalence of chronic conditions <sup>4</sup>



There are 94.0 **GPs per 100,000** population in the NT (compared to 125.4 in Queensland) (2019)<sup>5</sup>



# Continuing the expansion of virtual care in the NT will create benefits for people and communities

Healthcare and the way it is delivered continuously evolves as new evidence and techniques become available. The rate of evolution has increased in the last few years by transformative technology and most recently, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A range of virtual care technologies are already in use in Australia and will continue to build momentum. This Strategy provides the NT with a valuable opportunity to define its virtual care journey to be safe, reflective, responsive and relevant to the NT and its unique characteristics. Taking advantage of this opportunity will also serve the interests of Territorians and their health in some of the following ways:

Virtual care models can better enable people to

# engage in preventative care and self-management

This will be critical as the incidence of chronic disease, complications and co-morbidities continues to rise in Australia<sup>6</sup>

Virtual care can create pathways to

# increase cultural security



within healthcare by making it possible for remote consumers to stay on country to receive health services, as well as enabling broader engagement from family groups regarding care decisions

Virtual care can address barriers to accessing health care and

# reduce disparities

in health status and access to services for vulnerable populations and rural and remote communities<sup>7</sup>



Virtual care can

# enhance convenience for consumers

by enabling care closer to home, while lowering the burden of cost and time associated with accessing care in traditional ways<sup>8</sup>



# This Strategy aligns with key health system strategies and plans to ensure a consistent strategic direction

It is critical that the Strategy aligns with other strategies and frameworks in the NT. There are four key directional documents below with which the Virtual Care Strategy aligns. Other relevant strategies are included at the bottom of the page.



# Northern Territory Health Strategic Plan 2018-2022



# Northern Territory Health Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework



- Vision: To be a world leader in the delivery of remote health, through collaboration, excellence and innovation
- Alignment to the Virtual Care Strategy: Virtual care helps deliver on the Strategic Plan's purpose of being a world leader in remote care



- Vision: Setting appropriate standards for cultural security in health care, and demonstrating the benefits to be gained through the delivery of culturally secure services
- Alignment to Virtual Care Strategy:
   Virtual care can help to provide
   more culturally sensitive health
   care, and will be guided by the
   principles put forward in this
   framework





#### **Clinical Service Planning**



- Vision: Working together to improve health service delivery for all Territorians, no matter where they live
- Alignment to Virtual Care
  Strategy: This Strategy defines
  the digital capabilities required to
  deliver on the purpose and vision
  of NT Health

TEHS Clinical Service Planning

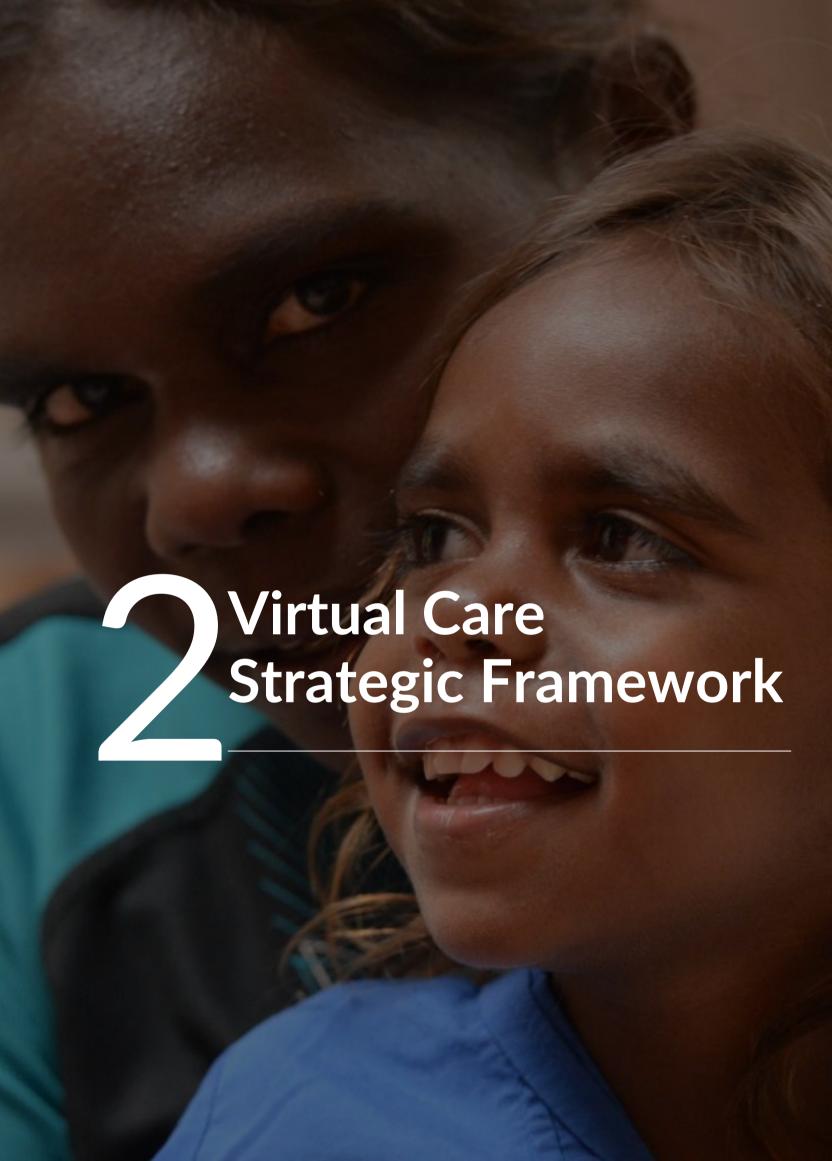
CAHS Clinical Service Planning

- Vision: Refresh and improve integrated clinical services including care delivery, education and research
- Alignment to Virtual Care Strategy:
   Clinical service planning will be an input to design how virtual care technologies will enhance existing care and service models

#### Other strategies and local initiatives to be considered

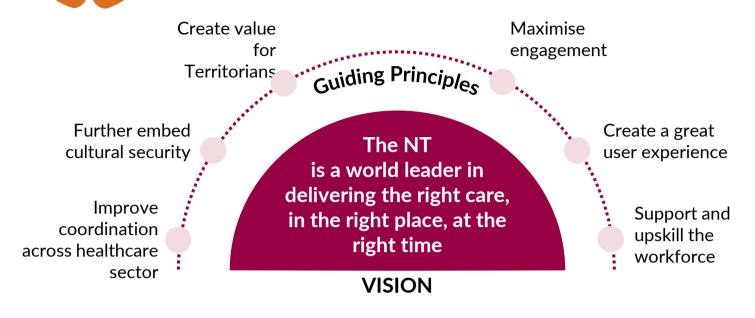
This list has been identified as further directional documents that should be aligned with as the virtual care journey continues:

- Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program (CCSRP)
- Northern Territory Mental Health Strategic Plan 2019 to 2025
- Northern Territory Health Workforce Strategy 2019 2022
- Northern Territory PHN 2018-23 Strategic Plan
- Northern Territory Government Digital Territory Strategy
- Northern Territory Cancer Care Strategy 2018-2022
- Northern Territory Rehabilitation Strategy 2017 to 2021
- Northern Territory Renal Services Strategy 2017 to 2022
- National Key Performance Indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care
- Close the Gap (2020)
- Everyone Together Aboriginal Affair Strategy 2019–2029
- Northern Territory 10 year infrastructure plan 2019-2028





# Virtual Care Strategy for the Northern Territory



#### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# Design virtual care models and procedures

Care models and supporting procedures will integrate people, process and technology aspects to create clarity on how virtual care should be delivered

#### Improve equity

A defined equity action plan will make sure that virtual care improves the access and effectiveness of healthcare for all

Territorians

# Prepare Territorians for change

Dedicated resources and communication channels will support consumers, health workers and the community adopt new ways of delivering and receiving care

#### Manage the transition

Identifying and implementing required organisational change will enable the intended outcomes of the Strategy

#### Measure progress

A clear plan for measuring and monitoring progress will support realisation of benefits and continuous improvement of virtual care in the NT

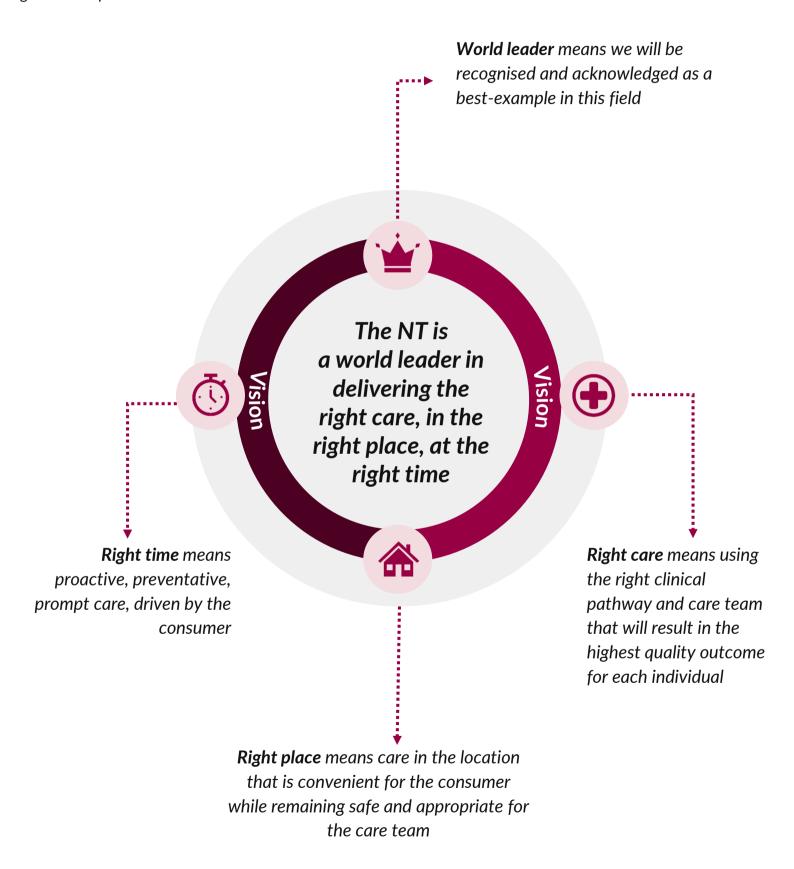
# Invest in appropriate technology

Investment in safe, easy to use and innovative technology and infrastructure is required to fully enable virtual care in the NT, particularly in remote areas



### Vision

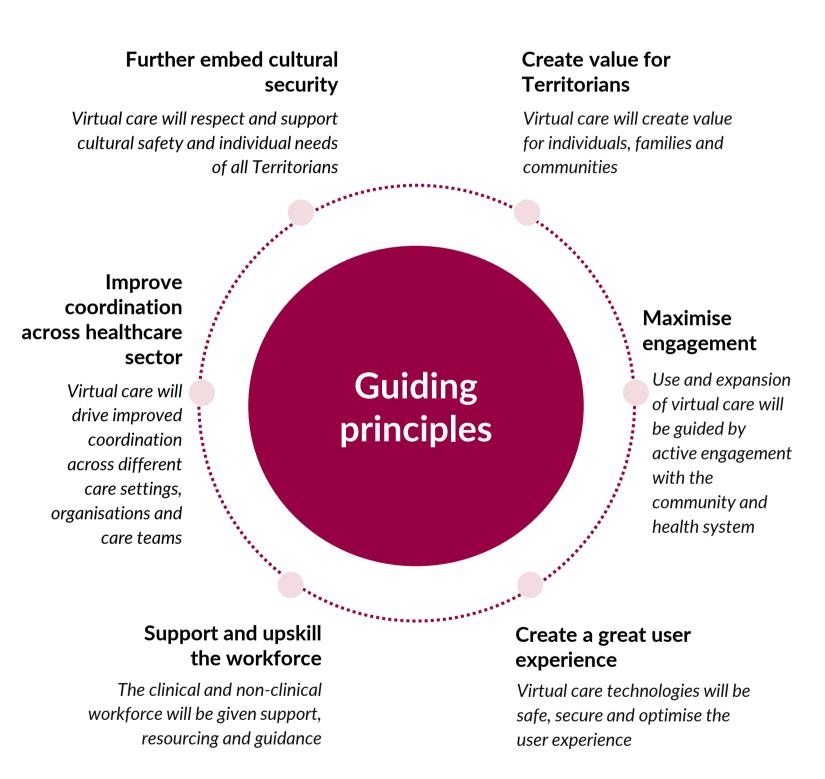
The strategic vision for the Strategy has been co-developed with multiple stakeholder groups to represent the NT's goals and aspirations.





## **Guiding principles**

The following guiding principles will be used to inform decision making about how virtual care is designed and implemented in the NT. These have been defined with broad input from multiple stakeholder groups across the health sector and community.





### **Strategic Priorities**

These six strategic priorities outline the initial focus areas for activity to bring the Strategy to life in the NT.



### Design virtual care models and procedures

This priority area focusses on articulating how virtual care technologies will complement fundamental care models, and the supporting policies and procedures that will be required to deliver these. A co-design approach, which includes clinical collaboration, will be taken to design care models that integrate people, process and technology aspects to create clarity on how virtual care should be delivered.

#### **Key actions:**

- Design integrated care models for prioritised virtual care use cases and pathways
- Identify how virtual care models will need to be tailored for urban, remote and very remote areas
- Define policies and procedures to establish how and when virtual care will be effectively delivered

#### Intended outcomes:

- □ Agreed virtual care journey maps and care models
- Clear virtual care policies and procedures documented and stored in a central repository

# Improve equity

This priority area focusses on improving the access and effectiveness of healthcare for all Territorians by understanding the potential impacts to access and outcomes that virtual care may have on vulnerable populations. Appropriate measures can be defined and monitored to avoid the worsening of existing disparities.

#### **Key actions:**

- Establish meaningful and relevant ongoing engagement to ensure virtual care aligns with all domains of cultural security
- Define and respond to risks and opportunities for increased equity of care access and health outcomes
- Collaborate with Aboriginal community representatives to define virtual care equity measures and monitoring approach within an equity action plan

#### Intended outcomes:

- ☐ Agreed virtual care equity measures
- ☐ Improved care access for vulnerable groups
- ☐ Clear engagement channels for relevant stakeholder groups



### **Strategic Priorities**

# **Prepare Territorians for change**

This priority area focusses on developing the resources and communication channels that will support consumers, health workers and the community to adopt new ways of delivering and receiving care. A considered approach to preparing for, managing and reinforcing change will result in better outcomes for all.

#### **Key actions:**

- Develop and implement a change management strategy that supports the health sector and community
- 2. Improve the readiness of the NT to adopt virtual care through the development of educational materials and communications

#### Intended outcomes:

- ☐ Understanding of the impact of change
- ☐ Improved change readiness for clinicians and the community
- ☐ Clear plans in place to support implementation

## Manage the transition

This priority area focusses on identifying and implementing the organisational change required to enable the intended outcomes of the Strategy. Any required organisational and structural changes or additions will be identified through engagement across the business, and prepared for and implemented with consideration of broader impacts.

#### **Key actions:**

- Develop a clear governance structure for virtual care that includes cross-sector leadership
- 2. Identify and plan for any consequential, organisational change
- 3. Understand commercial impacts including resourcing requirements
- 4. Develop relevant strategic business cases
- 5. Identify existing initiatives and ensure alignment and integration

#### Intended outcomes:

- Established governance structure in place
- □ Appropriate resourcing arrangements in place
- Understanding of funding required
- Agreed reinvestment plan



### **Strategic Priorities**

### Measure progress

This priority area focusses on establishing a clear plan for measuring progress toward desired outcomes of the Strategy. This includes determining methods to effectively track progress, understanding the data collection requirements that will support this, and putting in place ongoing monitoring, review and continuous improvement processes.

#### **Key actions:**

- 1. Collaboratively identify and monitor goals and KPIs
- 2. Develop a performance management strategy that outlines requirements for data collection, analysis, governance and reporting
- 3. Define continuous improvement mechanisms

#### Intended outcomes:

- ☐ Shared accountability for achieving outcomes
- Active monitoring of progress based on clear indicators, including consumerreported measures
- ☐ Integration of virtual care performance measures into standard reporting

## Invest in appropriate technology

This priority area focusses on the required technology and infrastructure investment to fully enable virtual care models in the NT. Tools that are safe and easy to use, and processes that enable access and support are critical for success. An innovation mindset can help the NT accelerate virtual care goals. Achieving better connectivity in the NT's remote areas is another key consideration.

#### **Key actions:**

- 1. Define immediate and long term investment plan for infrastructure, tools and devices
- 2. Put in place the required help desk capability and infrastructure
- 3. Update technology and IT processes as needed to support virtual care

#### Intended outcomes:

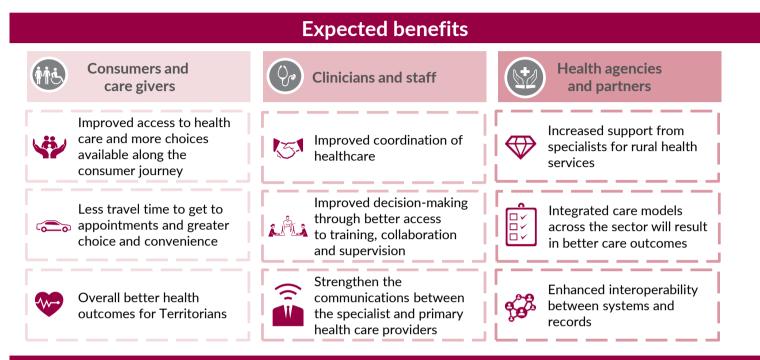
- ☐ Clarity on tools that are acceptable and available
- ☐ Agreed technology investment plan
- □ Prioritised uplift of technology in the areas that need it most





# Delivering on the Strategy requires a strong understanding of expected benefits and outcomes

Key benefits desired by stakeholders were identified during the consultation process for development of the Strategy.



#### Possible outcomes of virtual care<sup>9</sup>

Virtual care has further potential to increase reinvestment opportunities within the system to enhance health services, by reducing expenses on interactions that would otherwise occur in person. The following outcomes have been identified through analysis of consumer and staff travel expense data provided by NT Health for the year to May 2020.

It should be noted that the potential outcomes of virtual care are not limited to those listed below, however further analysis is required to better understand the scope and scale of these outcomes.

#### Travel cost savings



Initial estimates suggest that increased uptake of virtual care could generate over \$6.3M in travel cost savings annually.

NT Government currently incurs more than \$21 million annually in health-related travel costs. Recent research suggests that:

- 20% of all emergency room visits could potentially be avoided via virtual urgent care offerings
- 24% of healthcare office visits and outpatient volume could be delivered virtually
- Up to 35% of regular home health attendant services could be virtualized



#### **Reduced cancellation costs**

Cancellation costs represent a significant cost to NT Health. It is estimated to cost Government around \$950,000 in terms of travel costs related to cancelled consultations. The Strategy is expected to assist in the reduction of the rate of cancellations and provide further cost savings, by making care more accessible, and removing the significant barrier of transport.



#### Increased coverage and accessibility to care

During COVID-19 restrictions, the NT saw a significant increase in the use of telehealth services across regions, with early adopters of integrated telecare health models better positioned to continue and expand the use of telehealth while also reporting greater outcomes. However, further analysis would be required to understand the feasibility and potential coverage that could be provided.

NT Health Virtual Care Strategy Source: EY Economic Modelling



# For virtual care to deliver the outlined benefits, it must be managed through a defined governance structure

The potential governance structure outlined below demonstrates how accountability and transparency could be embedded. However, for it to be effective it must address both 'hard' and 'soft' foundations.

The ongoing governance structure will need to be formally endorsed as part of program establishment activities. Please note that the below structure represents communication lines and not necessarily reporting lines.

#### **GOVERNANCE FOUNDATIONS - HARD FACTORS**















Defined roles and responsibilities

Actions sequencing

Communication Mobilisation and Interdependency Business impact and coordination

alerting

mapping

assessment

decision making

#### **GOVERNANCE FOUNDATIONS - SOFT FACTORS**



Shared language





**Teaming** 

Culture cohesion



Integrated thinking



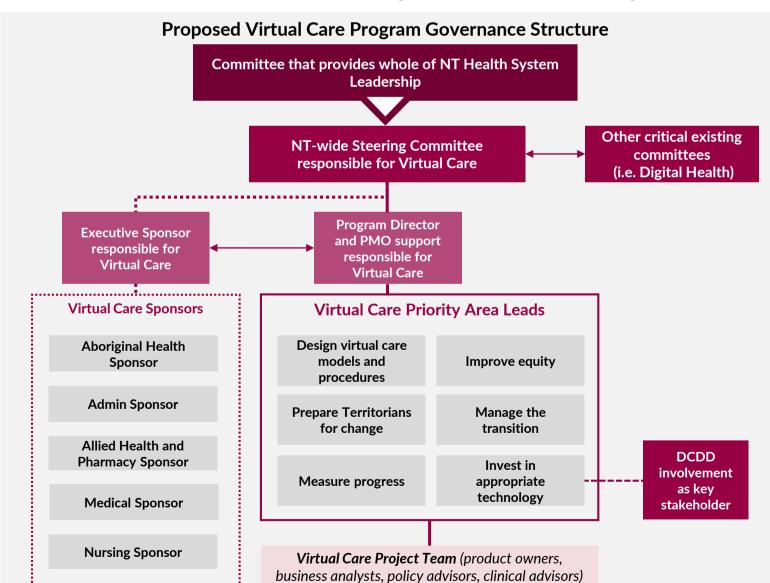
Shared vision



Consistent understanding



mind-set





# To set the implementation up for success, there are a number of factors that are critically important

Throughout the development of the Strategy, some key factors were identified as being critical to the success of virtual care in the NT. These success factors are summarised below and will need to be prioritised throughout implementation.

# Models of design and delivery

It is important to consider leading models of design and delivery given the live and dynamic nature of the Strategy. This may include considering:

- Design thinking a design process that encourages collaboration, innovation and agility while putting the user at the centre of the process.
- An iterative implementation approach (such as Agile) including a well-defined prioritisation method and will enable adaptability in the program.

# Agreed terminology

A clear and agreed upon term for 'virtual care' going forward, established in collaboration with the sector, needs to be established to foster buy-in and a shared understanding in the NT.

# Learning mentality and capability building

An iterative approach which encourages testing, learning and adapting should be adopted throughout the program to support innovation and develop the best outcome for the NT. Furthermore, insights should be used to drive knowledge transfer and continuous improvement.

# Technical integration

There are a number of technology programs being developed and implemented across the NT. It is critical that work within this program integrates with existing initiatives to maximise return on investments.

# Governance and accountability

A clear and well-defined governance structure will preserve and strengthen stakeholder confidence, provide a platform for good decision-making, enforce clear roles and responsibilities oriented for progress and oversee the overall success of the virtual care program (see page 17 for further information on governance).

#### Resourcing

The implementation of the virtual care program requires dedicated resources with sufficient capacity and relevant skills. This important consideration will dictate the pace of change that is achieved in program development and in implementing changes on the ground.

# Program management

Effective program management will be necessary to ensure people and teams are focused and collaborating across workstreams to achieve the shared strategic vision.

#### Sector engagement and collaboration

Clear and consistent communication, both internally and externally, to all stakeholders will help to manage effective implementation.

#### Digital maturity

The digital maturity of the NT Health system needs to be of such that it is capable to embark on virtual care implementation. Any areas that require a capability uplift need to be identified early so that investment can be prioritised to address these areas and enable progression of the Virtual Care program.





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# **Contributors**

The following table details the stakeholders engaged throughout the development of this Strategy across both meetings and workshops.

Organisation	Stakeholder	Role
AMSANT	Nicolle Marchant	Digital Health Advisor
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DCDD	Anthony Chan	Senior Telehealth System Administrator
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DCDD	Giselle Smith	Telehealth System Support
DCDD	Greg Moo	Senior Director Digital Design
DCDD	Jeremy Howley	Director Data Reporting Services
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DoH	Heather Malcolm	Chief Allied Health Adviser
DoH	Iris Raye	Chief Aboriginal Health Practitioner
DoH	Jaqui Hughes	Renal Physician
DoH	Jeff Robson	Chief Clinical Information Officer
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DoH	Mairead Kelly	Principal Policy Advisor
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DoH	Tarrant Moore	Executive Director Funding
Health Advisory Committee	Bilawara Lee	Member
Health Advisory Committee	Jill Huck	Member
Health Advisory Committee	June Walley	Member
Health Advisory Committee	Lynette Bynes	Member
Health Advisory Committee	Sarah Brown	Member



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The following table details the stakeholders engaged throughout the development of this Strategy across both meetings and workshops.

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TEHS	Amanda O'Keefe	Speech Pathologist
TEHS	Angela Brannelly	General Manager, Katherine Region
TEHS	Bianca Middleton	Consultant Paediatrician
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TEHS	Cherie Whitbread	Clinical Nurse Manager - RDH Diabetes Mellitus Unit
TEHS	Christine Connors	General Manager, Darwin Region and Strategic Primary Health Care
TEHS	Clee Tonkin	Physiotherapist
TEHS	Deborah McCaw	Paediatric Clinic Coordinator
TEHS	Fayth Christie	Intern
TEHS	Femy Koratty	Resident Medical Officer, Infectious Diseases
TEHS	Karen Stringer	Medical Advisor to Executive Director Medical Service
TEHS	Charles Pain	Executive Director Medical Services and Executive Director Clinical Governance and Health Systems Improvement
TEHS	Edith Bodnar Waugh	Specialist Anaesthetist
TEHS	Femi Ogeleye	Consultant Psychiatrist
TEHS	Greer Weaver	Rural Medical Practitioner
TEHS	Heike Saalmueller	Clinical Support Officer
TEHS	Jaimee Dutton	Team Leader, Community Allied Health
TEHS	Josie Curr	Director of Ambulatory Care
TEHS	Katie Roberts	Clinical Nurse Manager Alan Walker Cancer Centre
TEHS	Kelum Priyadarshana	Nephrologist
TEHS	Leanda Duncan	Patient and Travel Manager
TEHS	Linda Lukitsch	Director ICT Governance
TEHS	Lisa Scarff	A/Team Manager Forensic Mental Health
TEHS	Lorraine Horseman	Allied Health Manager, PRH Rehabilitation Service Operations
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The following table details the stakeholders engaged throughout the development of this Strategy across both meetings and workshops.

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TEHS	Matthew Maddison	Clinical Nurse Consultant, Chronic Disease Coordination Unit
TEHS	Melissa Mulholland	A/Renal Quality and Research Nurse
TEHS	Michelle McKay	Chief Operating Officer
TEHS	Mish Hill	Executive Director Nursing and Midwifery
TEHS	Nicole Robert	A/Clinical Nurse Manager, Cancer Care Coordination
TEHS	Prasha Sooful	Allied Health Clinical Educator
TEHS	Roaslind Webby	Medical Officer, Primary Health Care Outreach Medical Services
TEHS	Shernell Luckie	A/Safety and Quality Manager
TEHS	Stuart Mobsby	Nurse Practitioner, Indigenous Australians' Health Programme
TEHS	Tamsin Cockayne	Rural Medical Practitioner
TEHS	Thaila Hewitt	Speech Pathologist



# **Glossary of Terms**

Term	Description	
CCSRP	Core Clinical Systems Renewal Plan	
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease	
CRROC	Covid-19 Review Response Committee	
DCDD	Department of Corporate and Digital Development	
DoH 'The Department'	Department of Health	
EY	Ernst & Young	
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent	
GP	General Practitioner	
HITH	Hospital in the Home	
ICT	Information & Communications Technology	
IMS	Integrated Master Schedule	
IN	Initiatives	
IT	Information Technology	
KPI	Key Performance Indicators	
NT	Northern Territory	
NTG	Northern Territory Government	
OCPE	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment	
PATS	Patient Assistance Transport Scheme	
PGC	Policy Guideline Centre	
PMO	Project Management Office	
PREM	Patient Reported Experience Measures	
PROM	Patient Reported Outcome Measures	
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed	
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound	
Tele-ED	Tele-Emergency Department	
VC	Virtual Care	
VR/AR	Virtual Reality/ Augmented Reality	
WS	Workstream	