

# ***eHealth Practice Incentive Program Industry Briefing, 25 March 2009 – Meeting Summary***

The Practice Incentives Program (PIP) e-Health Incentive is an Australian Government initiative to encourage the uptake of e-health technologies in general practices. One of the elements of the Incentive is a secure messaging requirement.

Accordingly, the National eHealth Transition Authority (NEHTA) hosted an industry briefing session about the Incentive on 25 March 2009 at the Stamford Plaza Sydney Airport Hotel, in collaboration with the Medical Software Industry Association (MSIA) and the Australian Information Industries Association (AIIA). Peter Fleming, NEHTA's CEO, was unable to attend at late notice and extended his apologies.

The session was facilitated by David Rowlands (Direkt Consulting Pty Ltd).

The purposes of the briefing session were to:

- Inform suppliers and other industry stakeholders about the PIP and relevant context;
- Develop and initiate the consultation processes.

Presentations were made by representatives of the Department of Health and Ageing, NEHTA, the MSIA and AIIA, followed in each case by questions and discussion.

## **The Incentive**

The PIP eHealth Incentive is a budget measure that aligns with the directions set out in the Deloitte eHealth Strategy – namely that financial incentives should be used to promote eHealth.

The Incentive ultimately aims to encourage practices to keep up to date with the latest developments in eHealth. It has three components. To qualify for payments practices must:

- Have a secure messaging capability, provided by an eligible supplier
- Have (or have applied for) a location/site Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) certificate for the practice and each practice branch, and ensure that each medical practitioner from the practice has (or has applied for) an individual PKI certificate;
- Provide practitioners from the practice with access to a range of designated electronic clinical resources.

Specifications addressing secure messaging capability are still under development by NEHTA. Accordingly, to be considered eligible, software suppliers must agree to participate in consultation processes with NEHTA to develop and implement secure messaging standards and specifications.

## **NEHTA's role**

NEHTA will collaborate with industry to develop the specifications for secure messaging. These will need to take account of the emerging identification and authentication capabilities and approaches to compliance and conformance. A consensus approach to the specifications will be used - NEHTA will submit them to Standards Australia as

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candidate Australian Standards.

The Department of Health and Ageing and NEHTA recognise the imposts that can be associated with consultation, and funding is being provided for travelling costs for up to 10 participants in the specification development process.

NEHTA intends to “kick start” the consultation processes by publishing a “strawman” specification, together with a set of requirements, on its website.

## **Industry responses**

The industry – vendors and their representatives in the MSIA and AIIA – expressed a high degree of unity in their support for nationally standardised secure messaging. However, the industry is not homogeneous, and there are divergent views on some aspects of the e-Health Incentive. Industry representatives also expressed a strong desire to be involved in the development of initiatives such as this as early as possible.

A range of issues were discussed, including:

- The need to incentivise other healthcare providers since GP-to-GP secure communication is lower volume than GP-to-other-provider traffic. Specific strategies are still being developed
- The need for incentives to be outcome oriented and encourage change rather than just the capacity for change
- Software suppliers are hampered from implementing secure messaging by the lack of national health identifiers. National identification systems will be completed and pilots commenced by the end of the year, but enabling legislation for national rollout is not expected until 2010
- Some vendors and organisations are securely messaging now, and changes to existing processes will need to be managed. One purpose of the consultation is to discuss timelines, transition pathways and issues with the industry

## **Consultation planning and next steps**

The industry stakeholders present considered overall that financial support is appreciated but not crucial to their involvement. Up to 20 indicated a desire to be actively involved. How best to use the available funds will be determined subsequently.

Volunteers will email their nomination to the MSIA by no later than close of business, Friday 27 March 2009. The MSIA will notify NEHTA of the working party.

Development of the specification will be intensive over the next 3 months, but specific efforts required of working party members will be crystallized at the first meeting, which will be held before Easter. An initial “guesstimates” is up to 10 days input.

Wider consultation, communication and feedback to industry stakeholders will be via the NEHTA, MSIA and AIIA websites and mailing lists, and via Standards Australia.

Industry stakeholders considered that they could submit their Statements of

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Commitment to [pip@nehta.gov.au](mailto:pip@nehta.gov.au) by Friday 3 April.