



DHA | TE RŌPŪ
HAUORA
MATIHIKO
Digital Health Association

Briefing to the Incoming Minister

NOVEMBER 2023

The Digital Health Association's Briefing to the Incoming Minister

In an era marked by unprecedented technological advancement, the digital transformation of our health system is a necessity, a responsibility, and a significant opportunity.

Done correctly, digital health can help transform the health system from a cost-burden to a value proposition, where good health means increased productivity, economic growth, and happier, healthier communities.

We are the Digital Health Association (DHA) – the peak advocacy industry body for digital health.

“...the digital transformation of our health system is a necessity, a responsibility, and a significant opportunity.”

New Zealand's digital health agenda is focused on safeguarding the wellbeing and lives of our citizens, fostering economic growth, and ensuring our health system remains sustainable and efficient. Prioritising digital health has many compelling benefits:



Improved patient care: Digital health technologies can enhance the quality of patient care by streamlining data management, providing timely and accurate information to healthcare professionals, and enabling telemedicine. This translates to better diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care, ultimately saving lives and improving overall health outcomes.



Access for all: A well-implemented digital health system ensures healthcare services are accessible to all, regardless of location or physical limitations. It bridges the urban-rural healthcare divide, making sure every New Zealander has equitable access to quality healthcare services.



Cost-efficiency: Efficient digital health solutions can reduce administrative overhead, minimise errors, and optimise resource allocation. This makes our healthcare system more cost-effective and frees up resources that can be redirected to patient care, research, and innovation.



Public health and epidemiology: Robust digital health systems are vital for timely disease surveillance, outbreak management, and vaccination programmes. This is particularly relevant in the context of global health challenges such as pandemics and emerging infectious diseases.



Innovation and economic growth: A thriving digital health sector can drive innovation and economic growth, creating high-value jobs and fostering the development of cutting-edge technologies. With our small population and current datasets (e.g., NHI number), New Zealand has the potential to be a global leader in digital health, with the ability to export our expertise and solutions worldwide.



Patient empowerment: Digital health empowers patients to take charge of their own health and wellbeing, with access to their medical records, telehealth consultations, and health information. This fosters a more informed, engaged, and proactive citizenry who can participate in their own health journeys more easily.



Data-driven decision-making: Data is at the core of modern healthcare. Effective digital health systems provide valuable insights through data analytics, enabling evidence-based decision-making, and policy formulation.



Resilience and disaster preparedness: In times of natural disasters or emergencies, digital health infrastructure can ensure the continuity of health services, aiding both immediate response and long-term recovery.

The significance of digital health cannot be understated; it is both a catalyst for enhancing the health of all New Zealanders and for streamlining and expediting healthcare processes for providers.

New Zealand faces major challenges to the sustainability of our health services and the equity of their delivery. We face rapidly rising healthcare costs, clinician burnout and attrition, ageing populations, more demanding and digitally aware consumers, and constraints on funding.

The DHA strongly believes that our digital health providers, platforms, and solutions have the potential to revolutionise healthcare by increasing accessibility, improving health outcomes, reducing costs, creating efficient workflows for the health workforce, and empowering consumers to actively manage their health.

However, without the establishment of standards-based interoperability for health information, New Zealand cannot achieve the digitally-enabled health system it urgently requires. This interoperability is the key to configuring the system in a manner that anticipates future needs

and will allow consumers and health professionals alike to access health data in a timely and meaningful way.

This concept can be applied to **Hira**, a pivotal programme by the Data and Digital Directorate in Te Whatu Ora. In essence, it focuses on implementing standards-based interoperability for health information, granting citizens access to their health records.

Additionally, unlocking the full potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare depends on the reliability and accessibility of foundational data. Quality data is crucial to avoid the development of flawed models, which could otherwise generate inaccurate information and pose a substantial risk to our health system. Establishing standards-based interoperability is an essential foundation to fully leverage AI in addressing key challenges within the health system.

The DHA seeks your active and resolute support for this critical concept, and we are here to assist the government to move forward with establishing critical pathways for the successful adoption of digital health.

The DHA's Key Recommendations

This Briefing provides an outline of the key policy areas and recommendations the DHA urges the new Government to prioritise to fully leverage the benefits of digital health.

1. **Establish a Digital Health Agency as an independent and autonomous Crown Entity.** This Agency will provide appropriate digital health governance and create the ecosystem that will ensure digital health technologies thrive in New Zealand and improve health outcomes for New Zealanders. As well as system governance and development, this Agency would be responsible for other key policy initiatives including:
 - a) **Establishing a national digital health innovation network or hub.**
 - b) **Creating a digital health academy for the health workforce.**
 - c) **Creating a digital mental health hub to ease workforce pressures and service mental health needs.**
2. **Secure sufficient opex funding** for the continual maintenance, utilisation, and development of digital health systems.
3. **Make relevant legislation/regulation and the Therapeutic Products Act 2023 fit-for-purpose.**
4. **Fund and promote digital health through NZTE initiatives.**

While the establishment of the Digital Health Agency would be the ideal solution, we recognise it might not be immediately feasible. However, the recommendations in this BIM, including those listed under the Agency, are policies that require urgent consideration even without the Agency.

1 Establish a Digital Health Agency as a Crown Entity to provide appropriate digital health governance and development

Digital technology has become pervasive, affecting every facet of healthcare delivery, and digital health permeates every aspect of the health system.

But to really leverage the advantages and opportunities offered by digital health technology, and to further capitalise on the associated benefits and efficiencies, the concept of digital health must be properly and thoroughly adopted and embedded in the health system's operations.

In 2019, the **OECD reported** that the digital transformation of health is further behind than other industries such as finance and aviation. National digital health programmes are complex, multifaceted, and rely on many different stakeholders including the public and private sectors, clinicians, industry, academia, and consumers to collaborate to achieve successful outcomes. These challenges and navigating this complex environment can often result in unintended consequences such as:

- Slow technological progress
- Missed opportunities to advance healthcare delivery
- Inefficient resource allocation
- Delays in implementation of key initiatives
- The limiting of innovation and advances
- Higher costs
- Limited access to data insights
- Missed potential for public health impact.



As well as this, developing digital solutions does not follow a typical development life cycle of developing government policy: It is fast and agile, where procurement processes and decision making must be able to keep up with this fast pace of change. Governance of digital health must also be responsible, accountable to the taxpayer, transparent, and fair.

To address these challenges, the DHA is calling for the establishment of an independent and autonomous Crown Entity – a Digital Health Agency – that would report directly to the Minister of Health.

This entity would have a skills-based Board with an independent Chair, and representatives from the Ministry of Health, Te Whatu Ora, and Te Aka Whai Ora in order to ensure it remains accountable to the wider health system.

Under the Board would be six specialist sub-committees:

- **Clinical**
- **Consumer, equity, and hauora Māori**
- **Audit and risk**
- **Privacy and security**
- **Technical and standards**
- **Industry and innovation.**

The entity would be directly responsible for creating the ecosystem that will ensure digital health technologies are executed to a high standard and thrive across New Zealand, delivering value to every part of the health system. It would deliver systems governance, strategy, and national work programmes designed to drive wide-ranging adoption of digital health technologies.

To guarantee the entity's success and the implementation of national digital health strategies, it would require funding at an appropriate level, in line with global recommendations, representing six per cent of the overall health system funding and adjusted annually for inflation (CPI).

While we applaud the fact Te Whatu Ora has a dedicated Data and Digital Directorate, the very fact that Directorate operates within the confines of a large central agency, Te Whatu Ora, poses potential limitations to its ability to address the challenges and issues hindering the swift deployment of digital health. Its current structure also treats digital health as a vertical across the health sector when in actual fact, digital health is a horizontal that touches every corner of the health system.

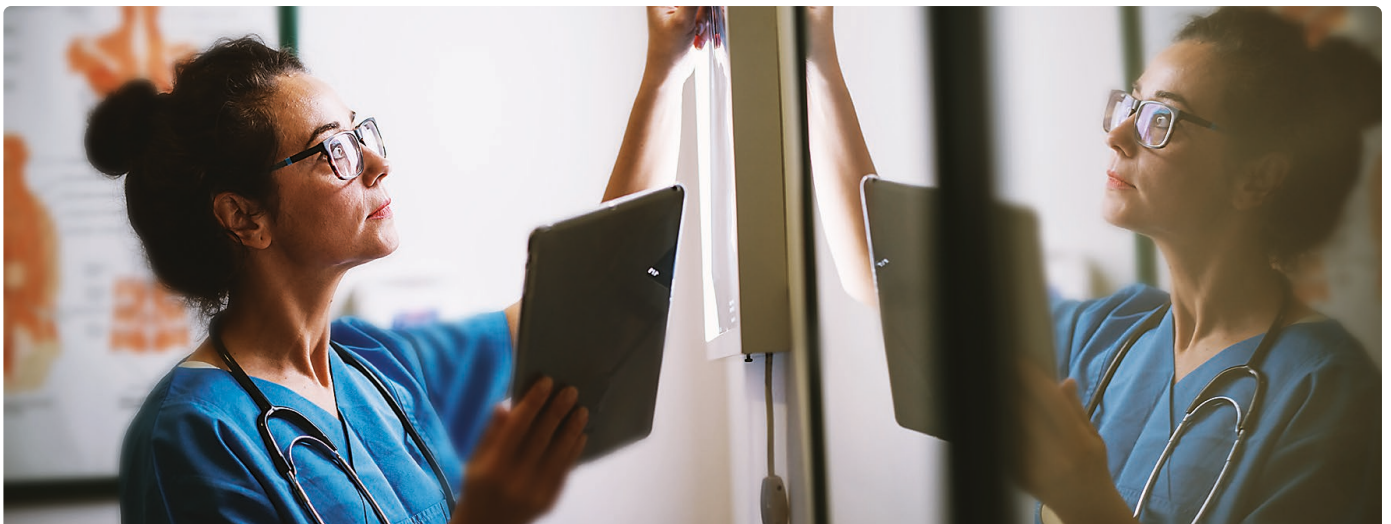
Having said that, the Digital Health Agency could be lifted and shifted from the Data and Digital Directorate, so as to create efficiencies and leverage existing expertise.

A single entity with the relevant powers, autonomy, and authority is necessary to address all the challenges listed above, as well as to address New Zealand's previous disjointed uptake

of digital health among its District Health Boards (DHBs) which hindered innovation, deployment, and growth in this crucial area.

Typically, there have been high barriers to adoption and a lack of funding. There's also fragmentation, inconsistent capabilities across regions, and challenges in education, resource access, and previously in national digital health policy development and execution.

The independence of the Directorate as a Crown Entity is essential for driving digital health initiatives and procurement autonomously for digital health. Without this autonomy, it relies on the current overarching and high-level Te Whatu Ora Board and Tier One leadership to understand the complex and intricate technical aspects of digital health and its ecosystem. This could introduce risks of misunderstanding, result in missed opportunities, and has the potential for underestimating digital health's critical importance. Establishing an agency with a dedicated focus and the right expertise to provide robust governance and leadership is crucial to address the complex challenges, offering a framework for swift execution, efficiency gains, and growth within digital health.



Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

- Create and appropriately fund an independent Crown Entity with a skills-based Board and subject-matter expert sub-committees to oversee, fund, and deliver national strategies for digital health. To view an already developed framework for the Agency and international case studies, [click here](#).

Responsibilities of the Agency:

In this BIM, the following three policies have been placed under the governance structure of a Digital Health Agency; however, the DHA believes they are critical to the advancement of digital health, even without the immediate establishment of the Agency.

As well as governance, work programme development, and structure, the Agency would have three initial priorities:

a) Establish a national innovation network or hub

This hub would be dedicated to uniting healthcare providers, entrepreneurs and innovators, researchers and evaluators, and investors to focus on new digital technology solutions to address high priority needs.

Over the years, Callaghan Innovation has had little remit and funding to support the advancement of digital health. The Health Tech Activator, a subsidiary of Callaghan Innovation, is due to lose its funding in the middle of 2024.

Another issue is that MBIE as the funding government agency for this work does not easily join up with Te Whatu Ora and the health sector.

The current state of innovation in health tech and digital health is characterised by fragmentation, disparity, and insufficient support. While there is a nascent conceptual design for a hub-and-spoke innovation model for health tech in the four main centres, encompassing medical devices and digital health, its success hinges on steadfast and ongoing government sponsorship. Without such commitment, the establishment of this model is at risk of falling short of its potential and New Zealand will continue to miss out on significant opportunities and benefits, including economic growth, healthcare improvement, and global competitiveness.



The creation of this new hub would provide a place to jointly participate in R&D of current technologies, collaboration, and incubation of digital health startups. This collaboration space would also bring in experience and expertise from all parts of the health sector and potentially offer support across different public sector programmes and innovations.

Ireland has created a successful innovation network. The [**Health Innovation Hub Ireland \(HIHI\)**](#) works across the Irish health sector with businesses to solve problems and improve patient care. By harnessing this innovation, through the development of new healthcare technologies, products, and services, it also creates jobs and exports.



Operationally, HIHI is a partnership of clinical and academic centres from across the country. It works directly with three hospital groups and the network can access all acute and community hospitals, pharmacies, primary care centres, and healthcare centres.

New Zealand would gain many benefits from creating a similar hub for collaborating, researching, developing, and promoting New Zealand-based innovative digital health technology, including:

- Healthcare advancements and cost savings through efficiency gains, both contributing to a more sustainable health system.
- Economic growth through new jobs and investments, which contribute to local economies.
- Improved healthcare access through developing technologies that serve remote populations.
- Contributing to breakthroughs in digital health through R&D.
- Helping New Zealand to remain globally competitive in this field and facilitating export opportunities for innovative health technology.
- Attracting and retaining key digital talent.
- Providing a place for knowledge sharing and inter-disciplinary collaboration.

Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

- Working through the Digital Health Agency and in consultation with the health sector, industry, and researchers, co-design, create, and fund a national digital health innovation network focused on the research, development, and implementation of digital health technologies.
- Investigate whether the new Dunedin Hospital alongside Otago University and the Otago Medical School can become a health innovation precinct for digital health in New Zealand.
- Ensure the \$400m set aside in Budget 2023 for the development of the [**Wellington Science City**](#) through MBIE also includes digital health.

b) Create a digital health academy for the health workforce

Providing appropriate, targeted, and timely digital training for New Zealand's health workforce will improve patient care, enhance data security and efficiency, and generate innovation while also reducing staff errors and burnout.

However, New Zealand's health workforce is not sufficiently digitally literate, nor is it well-versed in important cyber security measures. Neither are there any national training programmes to assist the health workforce to increase their digital literacy, enhance their understanding of cyber security risks, and help the health workforce to embrace technology developments.

The DHA recommends the creation of a 'national digital health academy' that sits inside the Digital Health Agency.

The academy should be tasked with developing and delivering a comprehensive national training programme covering a wide range of digital tools, digital literacy, and technologies relevant to the health system.

Its digital technology training should be carefully tailored to the specific needs and responsibilities of the various individual professions within the wider health workforce.

The health workforce should be given dedicated professional development time to complete a series of micro-credentials in digital health training.

This lack of training can cause many problems and issues across the health system. It can:

- Lead to inefficient workflows and compromise the quality of care.
- Create data security risks.
- Help foster resistance to digital transformation and change, and create challenges in understanding the technology.
- Invite compliance issues and increase costs.
- Cause patient dissatisfaction.
- Limit innovation opportunities.



Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

- Creates an online digital health academy within the Digital Health Agency to offer healthcare professionals accessible, customised training, certifications, and ongoing learning.
- Ensures digital literacy and cyber security training are core parts of the health workforce training and CPD curriculum.
- Provides the health workforce with professional development time in the training of digital literacy, cyber security, and digital health tools.
- Rewards healthcare professionals with micro-credentialing for undertaking digital health literacy training.



“In 2017 the annual total cost of serious mental illness and addiction was estimated at \$12 billion, or 5% of gross domestic product.”

c) Create a digital mental health hub to ease workforce pressures and service mental health needs

Mental health in New Zealand is a significant public health concern that is extremely costly for the government, whānau, and communities.

As a country we have high rates of depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders that are navigated poorly with limited access to scalable solutions and support. This is particularly concerning for New Zealand's young people, a group with grim youth suicide statistics.

We need a transformative shift in the way we deliver mental health and wellbeing support in New Zealand. Our health surveys show year on year increases in the level of psychological distress across our communities, while our youth battle **low levels of mental wellbeing compared with other countries** and previous generations. The total socio-economic cost and tax burden related to our poor level of mental wellbeing is incalculable.

Despite almost \$1.9b allocated in Budget 2019 to improve access to mental health services,

little has changed. Globally, youth mental health related disability or death comes with an estimated annual loss of **\$560 billion in economic contribution**. In 2017, in New Zealand, the annual total cost of serious mental illness and addiction was estimated at **\$12 billion, or 5% of gross domestic product**. Since this time, we have seen a **2.4% increase in the rate of psychological distress** experienced by New Zealanders aged 15 years and older. This rate of growth isn't expected to decline.

Whilst need for services climbs, rates of workforce vacancies in specialist services have nearly doubled over the last two years. We will simply never deliver enough support to our population in a way and time needed by using the same traditional models of service delivery.

Technology provides us with an endless range of transformative opportunities to better enable human-delivered care. Kiwis today, especially our rangatahi, may even be more comfortable accessing online tools.

Digital solutions can help us close our large evidence-practice gaps and enhance and expand the capability of our workforce. It can be co-designed with tāngata whai ora and whānau around their needs and experiences to ensure equitable, accessible care is delivered closer to home, and it would start to provide untold savings to the Government by being able to service mental health needs where and when they're needed.

The DHA is calling for Government to fund a national digital mental health hub to deliver a range of digitally enabled mental health services and social support tools in a timely, effective, and equitable way for people experiencing a continuum of distress and mental illness – no matter where you live in New Zealand. The hub

could offer support for the majority of mild to moderate cases, while allowing those who present as more severe cases to be caught before they fall through the cracks.

The digital mental health hub would extend, enhance, and digitally enable the current [Access and Choice](#) programme in primary care using digital diagnostic, self-assessment, and self-help tools. It would also provide access to peer support and bio-psycho-social interventions delivered by a diverse multidisciplinary workforce through a choice of digital platforms.

With proper design, integrated data, and evaluation systems, the hub will adjust and scale to accommodate new technologies and emerging population needs over time.

Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

- Further develop and activate the current beta version of the Digital Mental Health & Addiction Tool (DMHAT), to provide a standardised assessment framework to ensure the safety, equity, quality, and effectiveness of digital mental health, addiction, and wellbeing tools.
- Audit existing digital mental health solutions and applications and create a central website portal for the public and workforce to access information and entry into recognised safe and effective digital mental health tools and services. See Australia's [Head to Health](#).
- Design and implement a responsive, digitally enabled mental health, addiction, and wellbeing service model, including a digital mental health hub employing a dedicated remote team which would contain a call centre, triaging, virtual appointments, and access via remote patient technologies to many mental health services.
- Co-design a digital mental health and addiction strategy framework to help unify and guide future development, procurement, and governance.
- Bring together community and integral stakeholders to co-design a 'digital mental health highway' to connect individuals, whānau, practitioners, and health information.
- Partner with Māori to ensure development of te ao Māori digital models of care.
- Utilise and support our home-grown digital health industry by incorporating Kiwi digital health technologies into New Zealand's mental health system.
- Support intersectoral digital collaboration to reduce expenditure and increase efficacy through a unified approach to addressing all social determinants of health and wellbeing i.e., across the education, justice, social services, correctional, and housing systems.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

To actively support the Digital Health Agency, current digital health technologies deployed across the health sector, and national digital health programmes of work underway, we also urge Government to →

2

Revise Treasury accounting practices to make opex funding available for digital health technologies

Our digital health providers and platforms can revolutionise healthcare by increasing accessibility, improving health outcomes, reducing costs, creating efficient workflows for the health workforce, and empowering consumers to actively manage their health.

However, a key challenge is ensuring the right level of opex funding to maintain and leverage our existing digital health capability and infrastructure. By international standards that funding is not being provided at the requisite levels.

Traditionally, information technology (IT) systems, including digital health systems, have been

purchased and funded under a capex model, then depreciated or amortised over a number of years: depreciation reflecting the ongoing costs of these solutions.

As we transition to modern Software as a Service (SaaS), cloud-based solutions, with subscription funding models, most business and government organisations need to transition their IT systems funding to an opex model.

Critically, though, New Zealand Treasury's accounting and procurement practices lack the flexibility for this change in IT funding from a capex to an opex model.

“As we transition to modern Software as a Service (SaaS), cloud-based solutions, with subscription funding models, most business and government organisations need to transition their IT systems funding to an opex model.”





So, while there is capex funding available through Treasury, there is limited opex funding. This means government agencies that deploy digital health solutions struggle to obtain ongoing funding to maintain and properly realise the benefits of these technologies. In turn, this stymies growth, change, innovation, and systems development.

To remedy this issue, Treasury would need to “write off” a large number of capex impairments to get to zero and then move everything over to opex.

Other countries invest five to six per cent of all health expenditure in digital health technology, enabling them to take advantage of these technologies (including reduced system costs and improved consumer reach and outcomes) and prioritise its use and ongoing funding. This raises the issue of how that could pragmatically be done before the assets are fully depreciated

without creating operational deficits as our health reform takes flight.

The DHA urges Government to recognise the value of digital health technologies in bending the cost curve for the delivery of sustainable and equitable healthcare.

Increasing opex funding for digital health is essential for ensuring the continued functionality, maintenance, capability uplift, and support of already established digital health infrastructure and applications as well as for future developments in this critical space.

It is important that Government adopt accounting practices that facilitate and provide appropriate operating expenditures for digital health SaaS solutions, allowing a move from a capex to an opex model of funding. This investment not only improves healthcare delivery but also contributes to public health outcomes, cost savings, and the overall wellbeing of the population.

Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

- Reviews Treasury accounting practices and policies relating to the allocation of opex funding for digital health infrastructure and removes barriers to funding applications.
- Increases opex funding allocations for digital health infrastructure to a level that facilitates digital capability uplift of ageing infrastructure, legacy systems, and fragmented data.
- Supports the level of ongoing opex funding needed to maintain, run, and advance these systems in order to improve the operating capacity of the health system and support the health workforce at the coalface.

3

Make relevant legislation/regulation and the Therapeutic Products Act 2023 fit-for-purpose.

New Zealand's health information and digital health systems are governed by a complex web of laws and regulations that are fragmented, siloed, and often create barriers to the efficient flow of health information.

There are eight main Acts, plus several other periphery Acts. They include:

- **Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) 2022**
- **The Health Act 1956**
- **Code of Health and Disability Consumer Rights 1996**
- **Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003**
- **Health Information Privacy Code 2020**
- **Health (Retention of Health Information) Regulations 1996**
- **Privacy Act 2020**
- **Therapeutic Products Act 2023**



Together, the eight Acts and sets of regulations that pertain to digital health result in:

- **Legal uncertainty:** The ambiguity stemming from poorly defined legislation deters investment and innovation.
- **Data privacy and security risks:** Due to overly burdensome privacy laws and regulations.
- **Compliance challenges:** Legislation that does not align with international standards can lead to conflicting rules and requirements in different jurisdictions, creating compliance challenges.
- **Patient safety concerns:** Resulting from inaccurate or incomplete regulations.
- **Inequitable access:** Regulatory barriers can limit the adoption of digital health solutions.
- **Stifled innovation:** Stemming from unclear or overly restrictive regulations.
- **Interoperability challenges:** The goal of seamless, patient-centred care and the efficient exchange of health information can fall victim to legislation and regulation.
- **Regulatory gaps:** These can leave new technologies unregulated.
- **Delayed benefits:** Ineffective legislation/regulation can hinder the implementation of digital health solutions, delaying benefits for patients and the health system, and waste resources for government agencies, businesses, and healthcare providers.



The DHA wants a detailed review of the many Acts and regulations governing the flow of health information within the health system. This review should determine if these laws pose unwarranted barriers that hinder the timely implementation of the national digital health agenda.

And while The Therapeutic Products Act 2023 addresses some regulatory concerns, it still has

challenges. Its definition of Software as a Medical Device (SaMD) remains too broad and may encompass non-therapeutic health software. While there will be secondary legislation developed, the DHA believes the Act could be refined to only capture true SaMD and provide clarity, including reviewing clauses 19 and 26.

Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

→ Amends clauses 19 and 26 of the Therapeutic Products Act to include the following:

Clause 19 amended: In clause 19(1) (page 32, line 31), after “section 16(1)”, insert “and section 26(1)”.

Clause 26 amended: Delete clause 26(1) (page 36, lines 16 to 18) and insert the following:

(1) Software as a medical device means software without any associated hardware (other than an unrelated device that is needed solely to present a user interface) that – is intended for use in, on, or in relation to humans for 1 or more of the therapeutic purposes set out in sections 15(a) to (h); or that regulations referred to in section 19(1) says is software as a medical device.”

To view the full Supplementary Order Paper, [click here](#).

- Commissions a root and branch review of health information provisions in existing legislation and regulations applicable to the health system.
- Ensures industry is thoroughly consulted and is included in the development of secondary legislation for what constitutes SaMD and what is health software.

To read the DHA’s submission on SaMD and the Therapeutic Product’s Bill, [click here](#).

4 Fund and promote digital health through NZTE initiatives

The value of the digital health industry in New Zealand is significant and growing, as technology is seen as a key enabler to transform healthcare delivery.

The global digital health industry creates substantial and continuously expanding value for New Zealand, driven by ongoing technological advancements that can help reshape the health system.

In New Zealand, the development of interoperable digital health solutions tailored to our population's needs both addresses local demands and creates exportable tools.

According to the [New Zealand HealthTech Insights Report 2022](#), health technology

companies in New Zealand generated \$2.9 billion in revenue in 2021. The industry has seen rapid growth, with a 5-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.1%. This growth is reflected in the increase in employment in the sector, growing by 21.9% in 2021 alone, with the sector now employing over 10,000 people globally including 6,383 in New Zealand.

New Zealand is home to many innovative and world-leading health software companies which contribute to the country's growth, productivity, and advancement. And we have a unique opportunity to tap into the emerging market for computer design systems, particularly in digital health, and transform it into a lucrative multi-billion-dollar export industry.

Projections indicate that the technology sector as a whole is poised to become one of the primary contributors to our GDP by 2030.



“The International Growth Fund has been slashed by half from \$60m to \$30m. As a result, 400 fewer companies across New Zealand will receive support from NZTE.”

Further investment in digital health technologies can magnify these economic benefits and support these New Zealand-born organisations to take their products worldwide.

Currently NZTE compares unfavourably with similar government-funded organisations across the world such as Enterprise Ireland, and more alarmingly, has recently had its International Growth Fund slashed by half from \$60m to \$30m. As a result, 400 fewer companies across New Zealand will receive support from NZTE.¹

The DHA believes this will have a significant impact on New Zealand’s potential to grow its export markets.

The DHA wants to see more recognition, investment, and funding of this important sector. Rather than reduce funding for NZTE, as the previous Government did, we urge the incoming Government to make strategic investments in NZTE and in the R&D of digital health.

The new Digital Health Agency and the DHA would work closely with NZTE on these initiatives.



Specifically, the DHA recommends the Government:

- Increase funding to NZTE to develop a whole-of-sector approach to take New Zealand’s digital health solutions to the global marketplace, e.g., fund trade missions to bring global investors to New Zealand to showcase what Kiwi digital health companies have to offer the world.
- Increase funding to allow participation of digital health companies in export promotion missions to international expos and trade delegations to existing and emerging markets.
- Create a national digital health innovation network (see policy a) under the Digital Health Agency).

1. Email sent from NZTE CEO to industry on 27 October 2023.



“Prioritising digital health will improve patient care, equitable access, cost-efficiency, data-driven decision-making, and resilience in times of crisis.”

Conclusion

Digital health can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of healthcare in New Zealand.

The integration of digital technology is a necessity, a responsibility, and a significant opportunity that holds the potential to revolutionise our health system.

Prioritising digital health will improve patient care, equitable access, cost-efficiency, data-driven decision-making, and resilience in times of crisis. However, realising this vision needs standards-based interoperability for health information, and that concept requires Government’s resolute support, governance, and leadership.

Our briefing outlines seven key policy areas, each vital in harnessing the potential of digital health.

And we firmly believe that implementing these policies and recommendations will contribute actively and tangibly to the wellbeing of our people, the prosperity of our nation, and the resilience of our health system. Digital health should be considered an investment in our health system and not viewed as a cost-burden.

Your Government’s leadership will be instrumental in realising this vision. We have the opportunity to transform healthcare in New Zealand, making it accessible, equitable, and a model of excellence for the world, but your steadfast support is needed.

We look forward to discussing the opportunities outlined in this BIM at your earliest convenience.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryl Jensen', written over a thin horizontal line.

Ryl Jensen
CEO Digital Health Association

About the Digital Health Association

The Digital Health Association was formed in 2002 as a not-for-profit, incorporated society and is the peak advocacy industry body for the New Zealand digital health sector.

The DHA represents providers from across the spectrum with over 200 member companies ranging from Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to large multi-nationals with an interest in New Zealand’s health sector. We also represent a broad cross-section of healthcare providers, consultancies, legal, insurance, government, and regional agencies.

This strong network brings together custodianship of nearly 100% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s health-related data that covers a New Zealander’s health journey from birth to death.

We work collaboratively across the health sector, with government, and with key stakeholders to position digital health technologies as critical key infrastructure and an enabler of quality health, social care, and wellbeing services.

Our members make a significant contribution to, and investment in, the research, development, and implementation of innovative digital health solutions to support and enable the future direction of health delivery, both in New Zealand and internationally.

Our vision

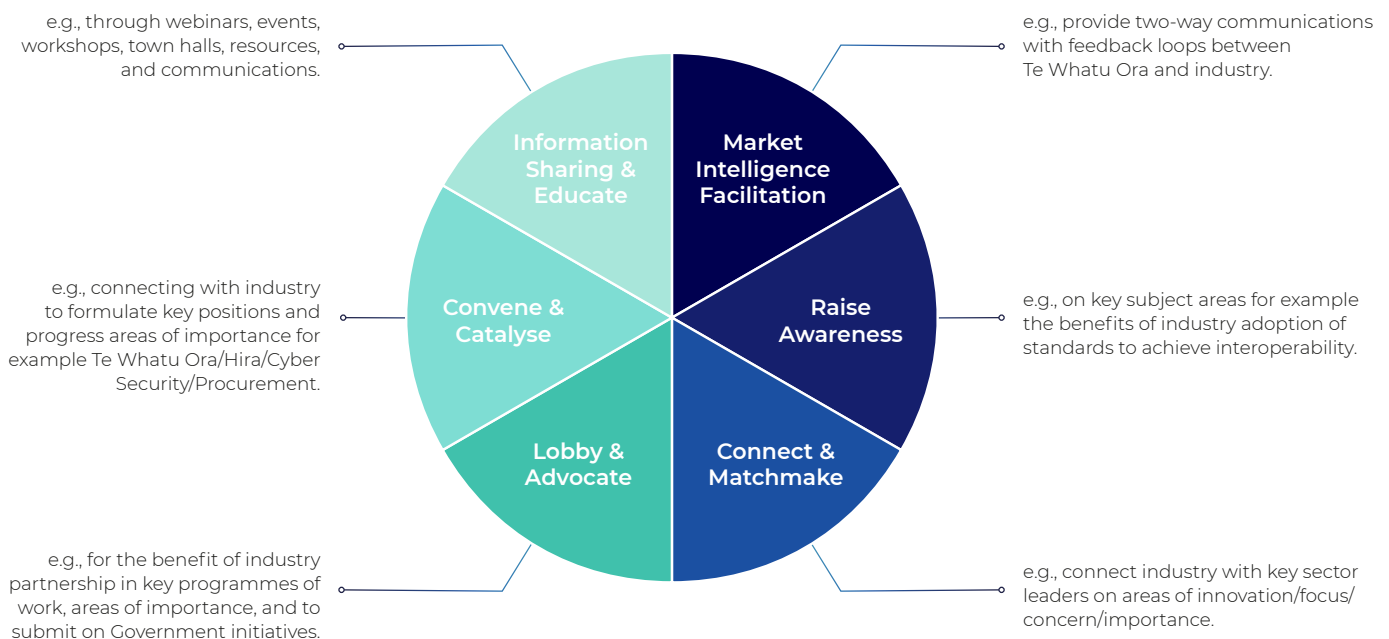
“To support and grow a thriving and vibrant digital health ecosystem”.

Our purpose

“The DHA is an open and welcoming community that enables an informed, coordinated, and powerful voice, with the goal of maximising health and economic value for all New Zealanders through world class digital health technology.”

Our purpose and function

At a high level, we have created the following graphic to illustrate our role within the ecosystem:



“The significance of digital health cannot be understated; it is both a catalyst for enhancing the health of all New Zealanders and for streamlining and expediting healthcare processes for providers.”



Contact us E: info@dha.org.nz | www.dha.org.nz