

# Memorandum

## Opportunities for AI and data and digital

**Date due to MO:** 26 November 2024      **Action required by:** N/A

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**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE

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**To:** Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health

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**From:** Health Workforce and System Efficiencies Committee

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### Contact for telephone discussion

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PROACTIVELY RELEASED

# Opportunities for AI and data and digital

## Purpose

1. This memo provides you with the Health Workforce and System Efficiencies Committee's (the Committee) advice on artificial intelligence (AI) and data and digital opportunities across the health system.

## Role of AI and data and digital

2. We need the right infrastructure, including technologies, to support and enable the workforce to meet health demand. The development and adoption of AI and data and digital solutions is increasing globally. Shifting away from a one-size-fits-all approach, AI and digital solutions enable care to be provided differently and supports the delivery of care closer to home.
3. The use of AI and data and digital across the New Zealand health system can help alleviate some of the pressures on the health workforce. For example, it can reduce day-to-day administrative tasks and support the seamless transfer of information between health providers and systems. There are also opportunities for faster delivery of multiple aspects of care.

## Challenges for AI and data and digital in New Zealand

4. While the use of data and digital and AI has increased internationally and is becoming visible in parts of New Zealand's health system, the Committee noted several challenges to further adoption and consistent use of digital health solutions across our wider system, including:
  - a. insufficient investment and resourcing to explore and implement data and digital health systems
  - b. inconsistent leadership capacity to encourage the use of digital solutions and expansion of existing initiatives
  - c. limited development opportunities for the workforce to build digital solutions-related capabilities (lack of support for the citizen developer)
  - d. gaps in how change will be managed, to reduce concerns of potential threats to existing jobs
  - e. lack of information on research, procurement, and approval processes.
5. Reducing these barriers to AI and data and digital solutions across health settings would free up capacity for the workforce to undertake other tasks to deliver timely, quality care.

## **There are opportunities to better utilise AI and data and digital tools to improve system efficiencies**

6. On 23 October 2024, Health New Zealand (Health NZ) was invited to speak to the Committee about current data and digital initiatives and future opportunities. Health NZ has two groups leading clinical and non-clinical data and digital work, <sup>9(2)(f)(iv)</sup>
  - a. [REDACTED]
  - b. [REDACTED]
  - c. [REDACTED]
7. These tools would enable the use of the wider health workforce in hospitals and primary and community care <sup>9(2)(f)(iv)</sup> [REDACTED]
8. AI is a key tool to improve system efficiencies. The Health NZ National Artificial Intelligence and Algorithm Expert Advisory Group (NAIAEAG) is a governance structure in place to review and advise on appropriate processes, safety, and effective use of Generative AI tools. For example, NAIAEAG has currently advised a precautionary approach for the use of Large Language Models, a type of Generative AI designed to help generate text-based content through algorithms, due to risks around breach of privacy, inaccuracy of output, bias, and lack of transparency and data sovereignty.
9. There is ongoing work to review this, <sup>9(2)(f)(iv)</sup> [REDACTED], so that it can be endorsed for use across Health NZ in the near future. However, the Committee is aware of the growing and successful use of a similar tool in primary care settings and in aspects of the private secondary care sector.
10. The Committee sees an opportunity, and indeed a need, for collaboration between the Health NZ data and digital team and citizen developers to support exploration of potential AI options that could be integrated in key health services.

## **The Committee recommends further resourcing to support work on AI and data and digital across Health NZ**

11. The Committee is encouraged by Health NZ's plan and structure to improve data and digital, and recommends further resource be allocated for the groups leading work to increase data and digital solutions and systems across Health NZ.
12. To ensure data and digital solutions can be adopted effectively, it is important to consider:
  - a. testing proposed data and digital solutions to ensure they fit into clinical workflow
  - b. how existing initiatives can be expanded to similar health settings
  - c. building strong clinical leadership to support the introduction of data and digital solutions within each work setting
  - d. improving communications and information available to the workforce to further explore data and digital opportunities in day-to-day operations.

13. The Committee will support and provide advice to Health NZ on work to improve AI and data and digital as required.

Dr Andrew Connolly

Chair

**Health Workforce and System Efficiencies  
Committee**

Date: 26 November 2024

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