



Northern Australian Regional Digital  
Health Collaborative

### Seed Funded Project

## Improving access to virtual and integrated team care for residents living in residential aged care homes through digital interoperability

This project was developed based on key recommendations from the 2021 [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#) (2021) and findings from a previous project by the Townsville Hospital, which focused on providing sustainable primary healthcare to residents of Residential Aged Care Homes (RACHs).

The objective of this project was to pilot a suite of digital tools to enhance care, establishing a foundation for safer and higher-quality experiences for both residents and providers.

Through an expression of interest, three RACHs were identified as project partners. Virtual telehealth equipment was purchased and distributed to each of the sites and a thorough review completed of their baseline infrastructure, technology, and workforce capability.

Over a 12-month period, use of technology, software, barriers, or improvements have been observed and reported to the project working group for discussion.

The implementation of cutting-edge telehealth carts and devices specifically built for use within an aged care setting have provided a strong foundation for engaging with local workforce within the RACHs.

Along with the carts, this project also introduced a shared care planning tool, managed by the residents GP and medication management software for RACHs. Early into the project it became clear that meaningful use of these three large deliverables, telehealth, shared care planning and medication management within a six-month period would likely not be achievable and as a result, the project team consolidated all efforts in laying the foundation of virtual care through the enablement of video telehealth with a longer-term objective of improving interoperability.

The 3 early adopter sites are now leading the way in a larger rollout of 36 additional telehealth carts, funded through NQPHN Aged Care Commonwealth funding.



NQPHN and the Townsville Hospital Frailty Intervention Team (FIT) are continuing to work closely with the project team and the 3 NARDHC funded sites to inform a broader scale rollout of digital initiatives expanding the geographical region to all 4 Hospital and Health Services within the NQPHN region.

One of the most valuable observations has been the importance of allowing sufficient time for local RACH teams to become familiar with the equipment. Confidence in using the equipment is crucial for its successful integration into their workflow.

What this project has demonstrated is that providing a leading-edge virtual health solution currently does not translate to improvements in interoperability. Until additional support and mentoring is provided to the local RACH workforce and digital tools and systems are developed on the same national standards, progress toward interoperability will remain slow.

Project leads: Janine Cox and Kieren Muir

## Key Messages

The project piloted telehealth carts, shared care planning, and medication management software in RACHs to establish a foundation for virtual care, initially focusing on video telehealth.

Integrating all planned tools within six months was challenging. Key issues included the need for more time and support for RACH teams and ongoing barriers to data sharing between systems.

The early adopter sites are now leading the rollout of 36 more telehealth carts. Future plans include expanding initiatives, improving interoperability, and exploring use cases like virtual triage and family-led telehealth to boost adoption.

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