



Submission:

First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap

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Introduction

The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group on the Discussion Paper for the First Nations digital inclusion roadmap.

IUIH was established in 2009 as a regional strategic response to the significant growth and geographic dispersal of Indigenous people within South East Queensland (SEQ).¹ As one of Australia's largest ATSI CCHOs, IUIH represents a network of five ATSI CCHOs in SEQ, one of Australia's largest and fastest-growing Indigenous regions, and home to 41% of Queensland's and nearly 12% of Australia's Indigenous population. Since 2011, the IUIH Network footprint population has dramatically increased from 59,483 people to an estimated population of 129,224 in 2023.²

The IUIH Network provides care to nearly 50,000 regular First Nations clients through 19 comprehensive primary care clinics operated by IUIH Network member organisations in SEQ. The IUIH Network aims to achieve family wellness through a one-stop-shop model and ecosystem of integrated health and social support services for First Nations families (Attachment A). Care coordination is embedded in a novel systematised model of care approach – a regional health 'ecosystem' called the IUIH system of care (ISOC). In a ground-breaking approach to systems design, ISOC supports new care pathways, pioneering an interwoven and seamlessly navigable co-location of preventive health, chronic disease care, disability, mental health, aged care, child care, legal, child protection, family wellbeing, domestic violence, and social services - spanning the entire life course.


Digital technology is playing an increasingly significant role in the delivery of health care, including online appointment booking, telehealth, and even health diagnosis, treatment, and management (e.g., wearable devices). This trend saw rapid acceleration during the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting the establishment of IUIH's Mob Link Service and Virtual Care Team. Through telehealth and video health technology, First Nations people can access a suite of primary health care, clinical, and social support services.

The Mob Link Virtual Care Team comprises GPs, registered nurses, social workers, allied health providers, pharmacists, and Indigenous outreach support workers. Operating from 7 am to 7 pm, seven days a week, the Mob Link Virtual Care Team provides acute and non-acute same-day virtual care services for First Nations people across the SEQ region. Community demand for this invaluable service continues to increase. From July to December 2023, there were a total of 22,607 Mob Link calls, an increase of 6,791 calls (or approximately 43% increase) from the previous 6 months.

Digital inclusion and access to services are critical to the health and wellbeing of First Nations people. In Australia, the digital divide is particularly pronounced when comparing internet access between Indigenous Australians and the non-Indigenous population. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) measures digital inclusion across three dimensions: Access, Affordability, and Digital Ability. The 2023 ADII reports that the digital gap between First Nations people and other Australians is 7.5. This gap widens with remoteness; in major cities and outer regional areas, the digital gap is 3.1 and 5.3, respectively, while in remote and very remote areas, it increases to 21.6 and 23.5, respectively. Notably, the report underscores

¹ Institute for Urban Indigenous Health. (n.d.). Our History. Retrieved from <https://www.iuih.org.au/about-iuih.our-history>

² IUIH projections based on 2021 Census data. ABS population projections based on 2016 Census data projected that the SEQ Indigenous population would reach 130,000 by 2031. Revised ABS projections are anticipated in 2024.



that the ADII did not collect data from urban and regional areas, relying instead on sampling. As a result, the digital gap for urban and regional First Nations communities could be even more significant than reported.

People without access to the internet and other technologies face significant disadvantages in our digital age. They are unable or less able to learn online, access information, receive mentoring or support, or participate in broader society. Key barriers to effective online participation include internet affordability and coverage, access to devices (such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones), data stability, and digital literacy.³ This disparity, known as the Digital Divide, is often delineated along socioeconomic, gender, geographical, and cultural lines.

The Mapping the Digital Gap project provides crucial data for remote First Nations communities.⁴ However, the 2023 ADII report acknowledges the need for more data from urban and regional First Nations communities to understand their specific needs and challenges and to measure progress against the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement). This additional data is essential for developing targeted strategies to bridge the digital divide and ensure digital inclusion for all First Nations people.

First Nations people living in urban areas like SEQ are faced with unique challenges when it comes to digital inclusion:

- In urban areas, where most First Nations people live, there is a risk of being invisible in the data due to their smaller proportion of the population. The effects of data aggregation or averaging can obscure the specific needs and circumstances of urban First Nations communities. Aggregated data often combines information from diverse groups, masking disparities and unique challenges faced by smaller populations.
- High socioeconomic disadvantage and higher rates of homelessness in urban First Nations communities mean that, while these individuals may be close to reliable digital infrastructure, affordability and literacy prevent digital access. For instance, children often lack the necessary technology for learning.
- Inability to pay for phones or phone bills can prevent healthcare providers from reaching individuals for follow-up care or welfare checks. UIIH's Prison Transition Service emphasises the importance of providing people with a phone or phone credit upon release to ensure they can be contacted.
- Poor digital literacy hinders the ability to register for services, complete online forms, make online appointments, or top up Go Cards for public transport to attend appointments.

³ <https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/government-submissions/connecting-on-country.pdf>

⁴ Thomas, J., McCosker, A., Parkinson, S., Hegarty, K., Featherstone, D., Kennedy, J., Holcombe-James, I., Ormond-Parker, L., & Ganley, L. (2023). Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: Australian Digital Inclusion Index: 2023. Melbourne: ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, and Telstra.

IUIH Response to Discussion Paper Questions

What are some examples of the digital divide between metro, regional and remote areas for First Nations people?

Australia's adaptation to COVID-19 led to significant growth in the creation and use of online services. Since 2020, many services transitioned online, exacerbating existing issues of digital exclusion. Research indicates that during COVID-19, older Australians' pre-existing digital exclusion intensified their lack of access to services and increased social isolation.⁵ Similarly, Indigenous children and children from lower-income households faced substantial educational disadvantages due to a lack of digital access and affordability.⁶⁷

The National Cabinet recognised that community-controlled organisations were best placed to support their communities, based on the strong evidence base and the proven success of ATSI CCHOs in effectively meeting the needs of First Nations people.

First Nations people score below the national average on all three sub-indices of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII)—access, digital ability, and affordability—with affordability having the largest gap. They spend more of their household income on internet costs and receive less data for each dollar spent, as they primarily use mobile-based internet. IUIH clients and families struggled to fully participate in telehealth services due to a lack of access to devices (especially those with video capabilities), insufficient data, and unfamiliarity with using the equipment and services.

To address these challenges, the Digital Connectors Project was established, resulting in a rapid transition of service delivery mode from 100% face-to-face to around 40–50% telehealth-based services.

The early establishment of a uniform telehealth system across SEQ ATSI CCHOs, and an IUIH Telehealth Team to provide training and help-desk support across the region. This included ongoing support for clients and the community to access devices, as well as continuous support and training to improve digital literacy.


How can we ensure government and industry design appropriate products and services to meet the needs of First Nations people?

To ensure products and services meet the needs of First Nations people, it is crucial to involve community representatives at all stages of the design, implementation and evaluation process. This includes initial consultations, product testing, and feedback loops. Additionally, recognising the diversity within First Nations communities is key; solutions should be flexible and adaptable to cater to various cultural,

⁵ McCosker, A., Tucker, J., Critchley, C., Hiruy, K., Walshe, J., Suchowerska, R. et al. (2020). *Improving the digital inclusion of older Australians: The social impact of Be Connected*. Melbourne: Swinburne University of Technology. Retrieved from www.dss.gov.au/evaluation-of-be-connected

⁶ Temple, C. (2020). *The digital divide: Lessons COVID-19 taught us about the digital exclusion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds*. Canberra: United Nations Association of Australia. Retrieved from www.unaa.org.au/2020/11/15/the-digital-divide-lessons-covid-19-taught-us-about-the-digital-exclusion-of-students-from-low-socio-economic-backgrounds

⁷ Winch, S. (2020). *Connecting on country: Closing the digital divide for First Nations students in the age of COVID-19*. Burwood East, Vic.: The Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation and World Vision. Retrieved from www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/government-submissions/connecting-on-country.pdf



linguistic, and geographic needs. Government and the industry must work in partnership with ATSI CCHOs to help facilitate community engagement, including in urban and regional areas.

How do we balance a place-based approach with the need to improve digital inclusion at the national level?

To balance a place-based approach with the national digital inclusion agenda approaches to digital inclusion must also recognise the unique characteristics of urban settings while aligning with broader national goals. First Nations urban environments, like SEQ, typically feature diverse populations with varying digital literacy levels, access to technology, and socio-economic backgrounds. Any national strategy must provide enough scope for local adaptation to address these diverse needs effectively.

Firstly, national policies must include specific provisions that cater to the urban context—such as funding for urban digital hubs, localised digital training programs delivered by trusted community-controlled organisations, and partnerships with urban-based tech companies and training bodies, such as UIIH. These provisions would allow urban First Nations organisations to tailor digital inclusion efforts to best suit the community's specific conditions and needs. Secondly, urban strategies should emphasise integrated digital services with existing urban infrastructure and social services. For example, ensuring that digital health services are linked with local ATSI CCHO clinics and health providers can enhance the impact of digital inclusion.

First Nations peak bodies and community-controlled organisations across Australia are excellent channels for building digital awareness, literacy and opportunity within First Nations communities. These entities are deeply trusted by their communities and have unique insight into local needs, challenges and solutions.


How can government and industry empower communities to navigate the financial side of getting and staying connected?

To support communities in urban settings to navigate the financial aspects of getting and staying connected, both government and industry need to adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses the unique economic challenges faced by urban First Nations populations. This involves providing tailored financial support, enhancing financial literacy related to digital services, and creating partnerships that reduce costs and increase accessibility.

Government and industry should collaborate to provide targeted subsidies or financing options that help reduce the initial and ongoing connectivity costs for urban First Nations individuals and families. These could include discounted internet plans, subsidies for purchasing devices, or even zero-rating essential services (making them GST-free) to ensure cost isn't a barrier to access.

It's crucial to develop and deliver financial literacy programs for a wide range of users and settings, that specifically address the costs associated with digital connectivity. These programs should be tailored to the urban First Nations context and delivered by First Nations organisations. They could focus on teaching how to budget for and manage monthly internet bills, understand different service plans, and navigate the terms and conditions of digital contracts.

By forging partnerships with community organisations and Internet Service Providers (ISPs), governments and industry can help drive down the cost of services. Partnerships could involve ISPs offering discounted group plans for community members or the industry sponsoring community Wi-Fi hubs that are attached to First Nations community organisations.



The National Agreement emphasises the importance of First Nations people leading and making decisions about their communities. It is not the role of government and industry to ‘empower’ First Nations people. Rather, First Nations communities must be directly involved in the conversation about what they need to stay connected. This could involve setting up community advisory panels that work with service providers to tailor products and financial assistance programs that best meet the needs of urban First Nations communities. First Nations peak bodies and community-controlled organisations are best placed to represent First Nations communities and drive these discussions.

How can industry be proactive in identifying where costs are prohibitive for First Nations consumers and find solutions?

To proactively address cost barriers for First Nations consumers, especially in urban areas, the industry can take several strategic steps to ensure affordability and inclusivity.

The industry should invest in research to gather and analyse granular data specific to First Nation urban communities, identifying price sensitivities and the economic barriers that these communities face in accessing digital services. This might include surveys, focus groups, and partnerships with urban First Nations organisations to collect real-time data on affordability issues. Data should be made publically available.

Engaging directly with First Nations communities is crucial. This should go beyond basic and often tokenistic consultations to include deep, ongoing dialogues to understand the financial hurdles these communities face. Regular workshops and feedback sessions can help tailor solutions that address the specific needs of these consumers, noting that the response designed for one location, may not be the appropriate response for another.

Industries can introduce flexible pricing schemes that consider the financial constraints of First Nations consumers, such as sliding scale payments, affordable and subsidised pay-as-you-go options, or family plans that cater to larger household sizes. Partnering with government bodies to create subsidies specifically for First Nations consumers can help make digital access more affordable. Additionally, industries can independently offer discounts or special rates for First Nations communities as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Ensuring transparency about pricing, fees, and the total cost of services is essential. Additionally, providing educational resources about how to maximise the value of their service packages can help First Nations consumers make informed decisions that suit their financial situation.

Investing in infrastructure that improves the quality of service in urban communities with high numbers of First Nations people can reduce costs in the long term. Better infrastructure leads to more robust service offerings, which can be priced more competitively and fairly.

Government and industry leaders can advocate for regulatory changes that favour lower costs and higher accessibility for First Nations consumers. This includes lobbying for policies that support increased competition in the market, which often leads to lower prices and better service quality.

What does digital literacy look like for First Nations people and communities in 2026 and beyond?

How can we strengthen the connectivity literacy of First Nations people and communities, including raising awareness of consumer protections?

Digital literacy for First Nations people should consider digital platforms not only for communication and entertainment but also as tools for health, social services, education, and community engagement. Within a health context, this includes supporting flexible, high-quality care, including in the home. It includes using apps to schedule healthcare appointments, access telehealth services, manage chronic conditions, and participate in health promotion activities.

Online content must be culturally appropriate, safe and relevant. First Nations health organisations are best placed in developing and curating safe digital health resources that are respectful of and tailored to First Nations cultures and languages, ensuring that digital spaces are extensions of community care and support.

As health data becomes increasingly digital, respecting and promoting clients' autonomy, protecting them from harm and supporting the community's understanding of privacy and security is crucial. An essential component of digital literacy is the ability to critically assess and verify the reliability of information, particularly concerning health:

- Equipping people with the knowledge to protect their personal information online, understand their rights related to data privacy, and navigate systems in a way that maintains their confidentiality and dignity.
- Supporting First Nations people to use digital tools for advocacy and self-representation, including skills in managing digital identities, engaging with social media, and using online platforms to advocate for community needs and health priorities.
- Training and resources to help individuals discern credible health information from misinformation, which is vital in the context of public health and safety.

Enhancing digital literacy can also open up economic opportunities, particularly for young people in urban First Nations communities. Skills in digital marketing, e-commerce, remote work technologies, and digital entrepreneurship can drive career opportunities and economic independence. Encouraging inter-generational learning where younger members teach older community members about technology, and elders share cultural knowledge through digital platforms, can strengthen community ties and digital engagement across all age groups.

The establishment of community workshops and digital hubs may be one strategy to strengthen the connectivity literacy of First Nations people in urban settings. This may create an environment where First Nations people can access data and receive hands-on training and support in using devices and digital technologies. This will also provide a mechanism for community members to stay up-to-date with new technologies and digital trends.

How can government and industry support First Nations media organisations to be sustainable in the long-term?

How can First Nations media organisations be supported to skill and retain staff so that talent is not lost to other organisations?

IUIH has a dynamic and highly effective communications and media team responsible for developing and delivering a wide array of online content. A key component of their work is the renowned "Deadly Choices" campaign, which aims to support and encourage First Nations people to make healthier lifestyle choices. This initiative leverages social media platforms and other digital channels to disseminate engaging and culturally relevant content, ranging from health tips and success stories to educational materials and promotional campaigns. Additionally, IUIH has produced other impactful online content, such as "Deadly Kindies" activities available on YouTube, which support early childhood education and development. The team also delivers targeted Facebook campaigns, for example, those promoting vaccinations during flu season and the importance of the 715 Indigenous health check. Through a partnership with Triple A Murri Country, IUIH also delivers dedicated radio programs and advertisements with a special health focus. While online content delivered under the Deadly Choices banner is funded through specific agreements, other online work remains unfunded, limiting IUIH's ability to attract and retain staff.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of First Nations media organisations or First Nations organisations with media teams, the government and industry should provide consistent funding and investment in capacity-building initiatives. This could include grants for operational costs, technology upgrades, and content production. Additionally, targeted grants and subsidies aimed at enhancing salaries and benefits within First Nations media organisations or organisations with media teams can make these roles financially competitive with those in other sectors, ensuring the retention of skilled professionals.


There is an opportunity to leverage existing training and employment pathways for First Nations young people who have an interest in media and communications. For example, IUIH has a dedicated education, training, and employment pipeline:

- **Pathways Our Way Academy (POWA):** The POWA supports First Nations high school students in Grades 10–12 to complete a Certificate III in Allied Health Assisting. POWA trainees receive individualised wrap-around support, a range of placement opportunities, and assistance for further employment or study upon completion.
- **EMPOWA Training (EMPOWA):** Recently established, EMPOWA is an Indigenous-led and community-controlled Registered Training Organisation (RTO) providing access to high-quality, culturally embedded accredited and non-accredited training, assessment, and skills development.

IUIH's Communications and Marketing Team has recently onboarded their first POWA trainee, highlighting the demand for traineeship opportunities within First Nations media organisations and teams. By investing in such pathways, the government and industry can help nurture the next generation of First Nations media professionals, ensuring that these organisations thrive and continue to serve their communities effectively.

How can the Advisory Group's roadmap help advocate for progress towards achieving targets under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap?

The Advisory Group's roadmap can play a crucial role in advocating for progress towards achieving targets under the National Agreement by providing strategic direction, facilitating collaboration, and ensuring accountability.



The roadmap can promote collaboration between government agencies, industry stakeholders, First Nations organisations, and community leaders. By fostering partnerships, it ensures that resources and expertise are pooled together to address complex issues more effectively. Engaging with First Nations communities, including those in urban communities, is essential for the roadmap to reflect their priorities and perspectives. Regular consultations and feedback mechanisms can ensure that community voices are heard and integrated into the planning and implementation processes.

The roadmap must outline specific, measurable goals and milestones that align with the targets of the National Agreement. By setting clear priorities, the roadmap will ensure that efforts are focused on the most critical areas, such as health, education, employment, and digital inclusion. The roadmap should also establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and reporting on progress towards Closing the Gap targets. This includes setting up performance indicators and benchmarks to track improvements and identify areas needing additional effort. The roadmap must be underpinned by appropriate resource allocation. The roadmap should highlight areas where additional funding and support are needed, including for urban communities. to achieve Closing the Gap targets, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed.

The Advisory Group has a role in highlighting successful initiatives and programs that can provide inspiration and practical examples for other communities and stakeholders to replicate or leverage. This will help to build a repository of effective strategies that contribute to Closing the Gap. The Advisory Group must also have a role in advocating for capacity-building initiatives that equip and/or build on the skills and knowledge of First Nations people.

How can digital inclusion support economic growth?


Digital inclusion can significantly support economic growth, particularly for First Nations communities, by enhancing access to information, enabling new business opportunities, improving education and skills development, and fostering greater community engagement.

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), IUIH offers a robust workforce education, training, and employment pipeline. This creates an ideal environment to build and sustain digital inclusion. By integrating digital literacy into its training programs, IUIH ensures that participants are well-equipped to navigate and thrive in the digital world. Investing in First Nations RTOs supports local communities to take the lead in their own development. This aligns with the principles of self-determination and ensures that digital inclusion strategies are led by those who are most affected by digital exclusion.

To effectively close the digital divide and achieve the objectives of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, both government and industry must invest in First Nations RTOs like IUIH. This investment would support the development and implementation of comprehensive digital inclusion strategies tailored to the unique needs of First Nations communities.

What role can connectivity and technology play in supporting First Nations culture?

Connectivity and technology can play a significant role in supporting First Nations culture by preserving and sharing knowledge, enhancing community engagement, and creating new opportunities for cultural expression. Technology can facilitate the creation of culturally relevant educational content that can be accessed online. It can facilitate greater participation in community governance and decision-making processes. For example, online community meetings and digital platforms for community discussions can ensure that more voices are heard and considered.



Connectivity allows for better communication within and between First Nations communities. Online forums, social media groups, and messaging apps can strengthen community bonds and enable collaborative projects. IUIH's 'Yarn it Up' platform is a good example of this,⁸ and provides a space for First Nations people across SEQ to learn about and contribute to a range of programs, services, projects and events.

How would digital inclusion support improved access to services?


Digital inclusion means that everyone, including urban First Nations people, have the same access to technology, and services and can fully engage in digital health, education, employment and social activities:

- Digital inclusion enables urban First Nations people to access the telehealth services they need when they need them, allowing them to consult with healthcare professionals from the place that best suits them, and find safe and appropriate information to support their health choices at a cost that is not burdensome. This can be particularly useful for those who may have mobility or scenery issues, lack transportation, or prefer remote consultations.
- Online platforms make it easier for individuals to schedule, manage, and receive reminders for medical appointments. This can reduce missed appointments and ensure that patients receive the care they need promptly.
- Digital platforms can provide access to culturally appropriate health information tailored to the specific needs and contexts of urban First Nations communities. This includes information on chronic disease management, preventive care, and mental health resources, and information about services and what to expect when seeing a health professional.
- Digital platforms can provide access to mental health services, including counselling and therapy sessions conducted via video calls, online support groups, and mental health resources.
- Digital inclusion allows individuals to participate in online health education programs and workshops that can increase their understanding of health issues and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Online resources can provide patients with information on managing their conditions, understanding their medications, and making lifestyle changes that improve their health outcomes.

For ATSI CCHOS like IUIH, who run targeted health promotion campaigns like Deadly Choices, being able to access, use and engage with social media, websites, and other digital platforms is important for the success of the programs. For First Nations people living in SEQ, these campaigns raise awareness about health checks and important health issues, promote vaccinations and preventative screening, and encourage participation other social health and wellbeing programs and services.

Access to digital health records can improve the coordination of care by ensuring that clients and healthcare providers have access to comprehensive and up-to-date information. This can lead to better-informed treatment decisions and continuity of care across different healthcare services. IUIH's internal digital health record system, MMEx, is a key enabler in supporting First Nations people in their health journey. However, there is a critical need for First Nations people to have access to some of the information kept in this system. A client-facing portal that stores information specific to the person's engagement with IUIH (i.e. more detailed than My Medicare or My Health Record), would greatly enhance health literacy among First Nations people.

⁸ <https://yarnitup.iuih.org.au>



Such a platform would allow individuals to track their health metrics, access their medical records, and communicate more easily with their healthcare providers. This increased transparency and accessibility can support patients to take a more active role in managing their health, leading to better health outcomes. To establish such a mechanism, funding from the government will be essential.

What do meaningful data sharing arrangements between government/industry and communities look like?

Meaningful data-sharing arrangements between government, industry, and First Nations communities are crucial for ensuring that data is used ethically, respectfully, and effectively to benefit the communities involved. Firstly, it is essential to ensure community control and ownership of data. This means upholding principles of First Nations data sovereignty, where First Nations communities have full control over their data –how it is collected, stored, managed, and used. Respecting data sovereignty affirms the inherent rights of communities to govern their information and ensures that they are the primary decision-makers regarding their data.


Informed consent and transparency are also fundamental to meaningful data sharing. Data sharing must be based on informed consent, clearly explaining the purposes of data collection, its usage, who will have access, and the potential benefits and risks. Maintaining transparency throughout the data sharing process involves keeping communities informed about how their data is being used, any findings or outcomes, and any changes to data sharing agreements. Data sharing arrangements should incorporate culturally appropriate practices, respecting community protocols, using respectful language, and ensuring that data interpretation considers cultural contexts. Data sharing arrangements should provide clear benefits to the community, such as improved services, funding opportunities, capacity building, and better-informed policy decisions that directly address community needs. Investing in capacity building supports community members to manage and analyse their data, increasing their ability to participate in data-driven decision-making.

Establishing equitable partnerships is essential. Data-sharing agreements should be set up as equitable partnerships, involving a collaborative approach where data initiatives are co-designed, decision-making power is shared, and the community's interests are prioritised. Shared governance structures should be implemented, allowing community representatives to oversee data collection, management, and usage.

Clear and fair agreements are necessary for formalising data sharing. These agreements should outline the roles and responsibilities of each party, the scope of data use, and the terms of data access and sharing. Regular reviews and adaptations of these agreements ensure they remain relevant and effective, incorporating community feedback and addressing emerging issues. These data agreements must be clearly communicated to the people and communities to which they apply.

Reciprocity and accountability are especially important for First Nations communities in Australia due to the history of colonisation, which has involved exploitation, dispossession, and breaches of trust. Fostering reciprocal relationships where both the community and external partners benefit from the data-sharing arrangement is essential. Implementing accountability mechanisms, such as regular reporting, community feedback sessions, and independent audits of data practices, ensures transparency and trustworthiness. This approach not only builds trust but also acknowledges the historical context and the need for genuine, equitable partnerships that can contribute to healing.

In SEQ, while recent changes to legislation will enable data sharing within the health sector to become more streamlined, there are still restrictions on how and what data can be shared. Work is underway to



develop a data portal between the SEQ First Nations Health Equity partnership.⁹ The purpose of this data portal is to enable better system planning, support individual-level care, and track outcomes in closing the gap across a range of indicators. However, this progress is a result of the dedication and persistence of leaders and is not funded work, highlighting the need for the government to fully fund and implement similar measures across the entire country.

What kinds of data would be most useful to you and your organisation or community?

For an organisation like IUIH, which focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of First Nations people in SEQ, access to various types of data can be particularly useful. This data can help in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and services to ensure they meet the community's needs and expectations. However, IUIH faces several challenges in obtaining the necessary data.

Data is often held by multiple custodians, such as different government departments, leading to fragmented data sources and inconsistent data standards that complicate integration and analysis. Moreover, IUIH has experienced that certain government agencies are reluctant to share data due to unfounded concerns about privacy and security, which hampers the ability to report on outcomes from funding arrangements. This reluctance also affects the visibility of the patient journey and the ability to provide continuity of care and identify those individuals most at risk.

Additionally, timely access to data is often hindered by bureaucratic processes and delays in data collection, processing, and sharing, impacting informed and timely decision-making for service and program planning and responsiveness. The available data may also lack the granularity needed to address specific community needs and tailor interventions effectively, making it difficult to identify and address particular health disparities and localised or emergent health or social issues within the community. Overcoming these barriers is essential to provide comprehensive, connected, and timely care for urban First Nations communities.

Since IUIH supports the SEQ population, it is crucial to have access to data disaggregated by various SEQ geographies, including suburb, postcode, statistical areas, and Indigenous Areas/Regions. The types of First Nations-specific data that IUIH most commonly needs, but has limited access to, include:

- Health Data: Granular epidemiological data, hospital data, mainstream general practice data, data on health outcomes, and screening and preventive care data.
- Digital Inclusion and Technology Use: Data on technology access and digital literacy.
- Cultural Data: Participation in cultural activities and language use.
- Education and Training Data: Granular data on training, education and employment participation and outcomes.
- Consumer Protection and Advocacy Data: Data on consumer complaints, feedback, and advocacy efforts.
- Child Safety Data: Detailed information on child protection cases, including the nature of interventions, outcomes, and long-term impacts on children and families.
- Justice Data: Incarceration rates, justice program participation, and access to legal services.

⁹ The partnership includes the Hospital and Health Services, Primary Health Networks, Queensland Ambulance Service, Mater Health Services, and the ATSI CCHOs.

Attachment A

