



Broadband for the Bush Forum VI: Telehealth Workshop – Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, Fremantle.

The Telehealth workshop was run as a Q&A session with Tim Kelsey, CEO, ADHA chairing and Melissa Veron WA Country Health Service, Lucy Falcoocchio, Kimberly Aboriginal Medical Service, Yogi Kanagasingam, CSIRO and Beth Sperring, DoH, WA.

In the introduction session, panel members provided a wide range of examples of telehealth including the case of a motor vehicle accident several hours from Perth. The accident happened at night in a region that had a small hospital with 2 nurses on duty. A number of the people had life-threatening injuries. Using the video conference link to the emergency telehealth service, the patients were triaged, assessed, treated and transferred successfully within appropriate timeframes.

Smart tools were seen as the next phase in the implementation of telehealth. Despite the clear benefits of telehealth a range of barriers to the uptake of telehealth were identified:

- Connectivity and infrastructure.
- The importance of relationship building between the patient and clinicians.
- Secure messaging.
- Lack of MBS item numbers for telehealth across a range of services.
- Clinical culture.
- The lack of rigorous evidence demonstrating the financial and non-financial benefits.

Key policy changes are required:

- More MBS items for telehealth – including a wide range of services.
- Patient travel savings due to telehealth should be redistributed, including a significant portion to primary health care providers.