"Sparked to Life": Australia's bold step towards streamlined digital healthcare with new national FHIR accelerator program

An Australian-first FHIR accelerator, *Sparked,* has been launched in Brisbane, which aims to deliver a core set of FHIR standards for use in Australian settings over the next two years, developed by and for the community.

 A new consortium including the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Australian Digital Health Agency (the Agency) and HL7 Australia has been established to drive the project.

The establishment of *Sparked* signals the Australian Government's prioritisation of interoperability and the sharing of standards based clinical data across healthcare nationally. Grahame Grieve, the Australian-based founder of the international health data and exchange standard, Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resource (FHIR) , said "FHIR accelerators, such as the Argonaut Accelerator in the USA, have been successful in increasing the exchange of information to support patient care. The key to its success was the iterative and open nature of the development process, anybody could participate, not just the vendors."

At the recent HL7 Australia Connectathon in Brisbane on 23 August 2023 to launch *Sparked*, Simon Cleverley, Assistant Secretary Digital Health Branch at DoHAC said *"Investing in the development and implementation of national core health information sharing standards is a huge step forward for Australia's healthcare system. With the funding provided in the 2023-24 federal Budget, we will be able to build the core standards needed to create a more seamless and connected healthcare system that can meet the expectations of Australian patients who want safe and secure access to their important health information."*

Peter O'Halloran, Chief Digital Officer at the Australian Digital Healthcare Agency says "The launch of *Sparked* excites us as a pivotal move towards seamless healthcare data exchange. Aligned with the recently launched National Healthcare Interoperability Plan, it will help connect systems across Australia. This step embodies our commitment to patient-centred care underpinned by digital innovation supporting a healthier future for all Australians."

Since 2014, FHIR has rapidly emerged as a best practice international standard for electronic health data exchange and is a beacon of innovation. Many countries including the USA and the UK have heavily accentuated the role FHIR plays in their health system.

CEO of CSIRO's Australian e-Health Research Centre and Community Coordinator for *Sparked*, David Hansen, said "facilitating the safe and effective exchange of information is one of the fundamental keys to better health care. *Sparked* represents a wonderful opportunity to improve

healthcare systems for consumers and clinicians and CSIRO is delighted to lead the Community coordination."

Sparked will adopt the Australian FHIR Community Process (AFCP) in which members of the community come together to develop national standards through a consensus-led approach.

HL7 Australia's Chair Isobel Frean noted the critical importance of the Australian FHIR Framework and Community process which underpins Sparked and future accelerators. "The AFCP's collaborative approach to further develop and maintain the FHIR standard ensures its relevance and adaptability to the evolving needs of the healthcare sector".

Want to know more about *Sparked* and Join the Community?

[AU Core and AU eRequesting FHIR Accelerator - FHIR Accelerator - Confluence (csiro.au)](#)

Be an active participant in the AU Core Technical Design Group

[HL7 Australia - AU Core Technical Design Group Home - HL7 Australia — FHIR Work Group - Confluence](#)

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