



## The promise of telemedicine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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Over the past 20 years there has been a revolution in global communication. There are now more PCs than there are televisions. The ICT industry has come of age, with increasing dependency on mobile phones, home and business computer systems and the Internet. Prior to the digital age we were totally dependent on television for electronic image transfer, paper mail for document exchange and copper wires for telephony. Technology has delivered for us high-speed data transmission capability using fibre-based networks, wireless connections for mobile phone and data transmission applications and access systems enabling efficient data retrieval. A number of drivers have led us to irreversibly adopt ICT solutions in health care. These include manpower, cost, resource availability and community needs. In addition, we have learned lessons from the global experience, saving us much on the change and adoption curve.

Although telemedicine has been on the horizon of mainstream healthcare for the past decade, the recognition of the need for change in healthcare has seen the rapid growth and development of new solutions. Our experience in the biotechnology sector has shown that Australians can identify gaps in knowledge, take advantage of research opportunities, develop clinically efficacious solutions and deliver them to the marketplace for the benefit of all. Many similarities now exist in the ICT space. While for many years we have accepted a steep gradient in access to healthcare between the metropolis and the outback in Australia, the next decade should see a more uniform, high standard of care available to all Australians through the effective use of telemedicine stemming from government policy, operational capabilities and modern work practices designed for the digital age.