

# Electronic Transmission of X-Rays

The Australian Financial Review  
Tuesday 10 June • [www.afr.com](http://www.afr.com)

## X-rays set for electronic transmission

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While the federal government lays the groundwork for a national e-health record, thousands of war veterans on the NSW Central Coast have already moved their medical data online and are poised to take the next step: the electronic transmission of their X-rays.

Telstra, as part of its Broadband Fund, has teamed with technology developer Smart Health Solutions to enable the transmission of images such as angiograms between the heart specialists servicing the veterans locally and surgeons in Sydney.

Previously, cardiologists on the Central Coast who needed to transmit urgent X-rays to Sydney had to post or courier them.

From the end of next month, these will be available electronically over an ADSL line provided by Telstra.

The electronic transmission of X-ray images builds on Smart Health Solutions' existing project to create and host electronic medical records for 3000 veterans on the Central Coast.

The system was developed at Brisbane Waters Private Hospital and went live three years ago with funding from the National Office for the Information Economy and the blessing of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In addition to Brisbane Waters, local specialists and general practitioners contribute to participating patients' electronic histories, which are accessed via a smartcard carried by the patient.

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The medical record resides not on the card but on a database hosted by Smart Health Solutions that is secured to the government's Gatekeeper standards.

The card acts as the secure token for the encryption technology that safeguards a patient's clinical data.

Brisbane Waters has used the card mainly to transmit discharge summaries to a patient's GP and could also use it to access patient records during a cardiac emergency.

The hospital would also use the smartcard to send images in minutes to surgeons in Sydney according to Tric Wright, the hospital's acting chief executive and director of clinical services.

The Smart Health Solutions system is expected to be extended to Gosford Hospital, which could result in broader participation by the local community.

Smart Health Solutions managing director Peter Flower said enrolment in the Smart Health system was also being offered to large health-care groups.

He said Smart Health Solutions had been inundated with applications to take part from veterans, hospitals, GPs and specialists.

The system, however, has been developed ahead of government moves to standardise electronic health records nationally to cut health costs and improve patient safety in a plan dubbed HealthConnect.

The standards and technological framework of Health Connect are yet to be finalised, but Mr Flower said the Smart Health Solutions system was compliant with it so far in terms of its “business architecture”.