

3 Guidance for E-Health Standards Development in Australia

3.1 Types of Standards

Standards can be classified by the way in which they are created:

- *Proprietary standards* sometimes emerge when a single vendor controls a large share of the market for a particular item e.g., the Windows operating system for personal computers.
- *Consensus standards* are developed by expert representatives of those with a stake in the outcome, who have arrived at a general agreement for a consistent approach. Representation should include vendors, health professionals, consumers, government and other interested parties who choose to participate in writing and agreeing on standards. Such standards are sometimes called *open standards*.

Consensus standards uniquely and importantly promote competition and innovation.

Consensus standards are strongly preferred to underpin national e-health capabilities.

3.2 Guiding Principles

The following principles are proposed to guide standards development for e-health in Australia.

1. Development of standards, technical specifications and supporting materials designed to support national e-health capabilities will be based on and compliant with the WTO Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards.
2. Open (consensus) standards will be supported in preference to proprietary ones, and international standards adopted where feasible.
3. Leadership, direction setting, planning and coordination of standards development activities will be collaborative across the sector. The aim is to ensure a high level of coherence and consistency in approach, eliminate duplication and wasted effort, and encourage wide participation in standards development and subsequent implementation.
4. Standards development will be tightly coupled with and validated through working implementations, and where possible will be developed in association with system development and/or implementation initiatives.
5. Standards development will:
 - commence with the preparation of formal requirements specifications¹⁵ and a comprehensive scan for existing candidate standards;

¹⁵ While it may be argued that this will slow standards development, good practice in design and development generally demonstrates that basing development on a clear and widely accepted understanding of requirements is likely to decrease development time overall, and does not preclude the use of fast-track processes.