

Australian Education and Healthcare Industry Trends in 2023



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It is hard to find two sectors that have faced more disruption over the last few years than our healthcare and education institutions. Hospitals and healthcare providers have been under incredible strain to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and schools and colleges at all levels have had to adapt rapidly to community lockdowns, staff shortages and student issues.

The good news is that the changes forced on education and healthcare have been a catalyst for transformation and a rapid acceleration in the adoption of new technologies and practices. As life returns to normal, the transformation we have seen to date is set to continue, and we look at some of the trends to watch in 2023.

Education

With every new year come new education trends. Whether you're an administrator or classroom teacher, keeping tabs on these higher education trends and incorporating them into the running of your university classrooms can help your institution and your students find success this school year.

Healthcare

It's time to look ahead at healthcare trends for the year! As you know, the healthcare sector has gone through massive evolution in the last few years. The global pandemic provided a catalyst for the transformation, but the industry has continued to adapt to new trends and technologies.

That's why key healthcare trends in 2023 centre on efforts to streamline communication and other processes in response to health worker shortages and other factors.

Adoption of remote service delivery models

Healthcare and education providers were forced to shift rapidly in response to the pandemic to remote delivery and access to services. That has really opened our eyes to the benefits and future potential of these remote models. There are significant efficiency gains for organisations, and huge advantages in accessibility for a wide range of patients and students.

Significant trends for 2023

Education: Online learning expands opportunity and accessibility

While the pandemic brought many challenges for educators, it also shifted classrooms to online learning very quickly. This had its pros and cons. Today, while many classrooms have moved back to in-person learning, online learning has become even more solidified as an accessible option for many students.

Universities are seeing demographic shifts on both ends of the age spectrum. New Gen Z students have grown up in the online world and may have completed a portion of their high school years online. Many mature learners are returning to accessing further education while working, and online learning makes it possible for them to study from the comfort of home, often in an asynchronous way.

Online learning is also diversity-friendly, providing better learning access for students who are:

- Caretakers of parents or children;
- Disabled or chronically ill;
- Rural residents;
- Traveling due to work or home priorities; or
- Need to study outside traditional hours due to work commitments.

With online learning comes the need for an integrated platform for both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.

Your teachers need a safe place to store documents and upload video, and your students need digital venues to upload their assignments and chat online.

Healthcare: Continued growth in telehealth

Telehealth became a necessity for patients to access healthcare during COVID-19 lockdowns, and the Australian Government responded rapidly to support this with changes to the Medicare Benefits Scheme to make remote services more accessible and affordable.

While access has been wound back post-COVID, the benefits of telehealth for rural and remote patients, and those with mobility or chronic health issues have been clearly recognised, and there continues to be Medicare support for access to telehealth services for a range of out of hospital consultations.

Growth in telehealth is expected to continue in 2023. This delivery mode is more cost-effective for everyone involved in the health system. It is more convenient and flexible for patients and greatly reduces the number of patient no-shows.



Patient, student and staff experience

Customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX) came under intense pressure in all industry sectors, but the additional strain on everyone involved in education and healthcare amplified these CX and EX issues. As healthcare and education organisations adopt permanent hybrid environments for their staff and patients or students, we will see extra focus on CX and EX in 2023.

Significant trends for 2023

Healthcare: More focus on patient experience

Due to staff shortages, government funding issues and an out-of-date Medicare system, healthcare services have been under pressure and patient complaints have risen dramatically. The Australian Government has recognised the issue and is planning to address this through the release of its Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report and a major revamp of the primary care system.

On the ground, for a sustainable, thriving healthcare practice, it is essential to prioritise the patient experience to maintain satisfaction.

There are many factors that contribute to a strong patient experience, including:

- **Personalisation.** When patients have choices, they choose providers that show genuine interest in their welfare. The best way to do this is with personalised service both in-person and via digital platforms.
- **Convenience and accessibility.** People want access to convenient locations and alternative methods of accessing health services. Integrating virtual care with your in-office experiences is vital.
- **Communication and information.** Effective communication and availability of information are critical to patients who have concerns about their health. In a modern healthcare practice, meeting high standards for

communication dictates an omnichannel approach that improves patient-to-provider access via web chat, messaging, and other non-traditional touch points.

- **Tech tools and features.** A modern website that offers web chat for patients or a secure mobile app are among the essential tech tools patients expect from health providers. A comprehensive patient portal and flexible, self-service options also help address new healthcare consumers' expectations.

Healthcare: More employee-friendly work environments

Well documented workforce shortages across the sector are a great strain on many healthcare employers. The scramble for talent is one of the factors contributing to competition in the industry. To attract and retain staff, healthcare organisations are developing more flexible work environments for both non-clinical and certain clinical roles.

In addition to various strategies for improving on-site culture, hybrid and remote work opportunities have been maintained. These remote work structures were a response to COVID, but they are desirable for both employees seeking flexibility and employers wanting access to a larger talent pool.

Education: Hybrid learning enters a new phase

While many universities used hybrid learning models prior to 2020, more and more university (and now secondary school) classrooms are embracing the flexibility of hybrid learning. It offers the best of both the in-person and digital worlds: students can chat in class and online, and engage with materials in person and through digital communities. Hybrid learning gives students a deeper feeling of community while offering the flexibility of digital education.

With hybrid learning, it's important to utilise consistent technology, providing a unified online portal for students' course communications. Giving students a learning hub allows them to interact with ease as they become fluent in their online learning platform. It also provides consistency between home and school. Students can use the same platform in class and outside of class.

Education: High-quality communication with students becomes critical

As Gen Z students enter the university system, it's important to be able to communicate in the ways that these students want to connect.

Current and prospective students want to be able to communicate with tertiary institutions through multiple touchpoints such as voice, SMS, social media, and email. An omnichannel communications system such as RingCentral can help you ensure that you have all of your bases covered when it comes to admitting and retaining students through strong communication.

Mental health and social issues

There is a far greater awareness of the mental health and social issues in both the education and healthcare sectors. In each sector, we are seeing a concerted effort to address peoples' mental health needs, and to maintain an environment and develop services to respond effectively.

Significant trends for 2023

Education: Campuses double down on improving student mental health

In addition to the stresses of teaching and student life, the pandemic and the social isolation that ensued was difficult for teachers' and students' mental health. Fostering better mental health and rebuilding a sense of educational community will be a focus of educators and administrators in 2023. As a clear example, the sharp rise in primary and secondary school refusals has sparked an Australian Senate referral to the Education and Employment References Committee for inquiry and report by 22 March 2023.

Campus mental health programs, online and in-person community-building tools, and training in technologies that bring students together can make it easier for both students and teachers to do the work of learning and teaching.

Education: Students and families under cost pressures

While tertiary education is broadly accessible due to Australia's Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) – previously the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) – a student's average HELP debt is expected to increase considerably in 2023. Fee-free TAFE courses for in-demand skills is also helping. However, with a higher prospective HELP debt, a rising cost of living and increasing housing rents, more and more students are working longer hours or even holding down a full-time job while continuing to attend higher education. Students are conscious of both the cost of their education and the associated costs such as books, technology, housing, and commuting to campus.

Using an integrated communications platform such as RingCentral that combines phone and virtual classroom support can save your institution on staff training and reduce staff and student frustration with learning technologies.

Healthcare: Escalation of mental health treatments

In 2023, preventative and therapeutic treatments for mental health will continue to rise and have made their way onto our healthcare trends list for good reason.

In March 2022, the World Health Organization indicated that COVID-19 triggered a 25-percent spike in anxiety and depression around the world. The sustained trappings of the pandemic left indelible mental and emotional scars for many people. Use of counselling and prescription medications have been among key medical responses, along with various home therapies. In response to COVID-19, in Australia the Better Access initiative gives Medicare rebates to help people access mental health professionals and care, regardless of where they live.



Innovation

By embracing digital platforms during the pandemic, innovative approaches in the delivery of services in both the education and healthcare sectors have flourished. “Necessity is the mother of invention” has never been more true than the experience of the last few years, and we are set to reap the benefits of these advances in 2023 and beyond.

Significant trends for 2023

Education: Gamification in learning becomes the new norm

Today’s students have grown up online with games such as Minecraft. Gamification brings real-life problems into the classroom, and it makes them more engaging for students, drawing them into solving problems in a familiar way. Queensland Education is using VR technology in science, maths, history and geography classes at three high schools in Cairns, and at Dalby State High School in Queensland’s Western Downs to encourage more students into agricultural careers.

Gamifying education isn’t just part of high school classrooms; it can be part of higher education as well. For example, courses in gamification are offered at institutions including Curtin University, Deakin University and University of Western Sydney.

Communication systems can help by providing video content and can give a forum for student connection as they communicate, trying to solve problems together inside and outside the classroom.

Education: Project-based learning is top priority

Most students will encounter a work environment that focuses on completing projects independently or as a team, so educational institutions are shifting to a focus on more project-based work. In project-based work and learning environments, “soft skills” such as collaboration, communication, and problem-solving become key to students’ success. Students also learn how to try out ideas and learn from trial and error.

Does your technology simply focus on sending information out to students,

or does it facilitate collaboration? More and more, any educational technologies that you use in the classroom should be communication-oriented, seeking to build up students' ability to collaborate.

Healthcare: Expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and digitisation

The healthcare sector has experienced rapid digital progression. Much of the digitisation centres on meeting the needs of a remote workforce and patients with restricted mobility.

In addition to patient and employee-centred functions, digitisation is being used for research. AI, which has been embedded in many processes, is driving more intuitive patient research. It enables more intelligent analysis of patient interactions across all platforms. It is also being used to capture and share data from clinical trials.

Healthcare: More personal tracking of healthcare via wearable devices

The pandemic spawned greater enthusiasm for remote patient management and supportive self-monitoring of chronic health conditions. Rather than waiting for illness to react, people are more proactive with preventative health measures and self-care adherence.

Wearable devices allow for virtual 24/7 tracking of a variety of data metrics, including:

- **Pulse and blood pressure.** Tracking basic heart-related data during fitness has long been a popular use of wearable devices. Software applications sync with the device to enable tracking of these metrics throughout the day.
- **Sleep effectiveness.** Measuring sleep quality is a relatively new phenomenon. People that struggle with insomnia, restlessness, or fatigue monitor sleep patterns to identify potential problems.
- **Stress management.** Mental health has attracted a lot of attention in the wearable device arena. Mood detection, soothing vibrations, and healing lights are among common strategies used for stress management.



Structural changes

In addition to stress on our information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure wrought by the switch to remote digital delivery models, there are a number of other fundamental changes the education and healthcare sector will need to tackle in 2023.

Significant trends for 2023

Education: Online learning infrastructure continues to level up

The pandemic opened peoples' eyes to online learning, but the experience was quite inconsistent. Many teachers struggled with the overnight change, and they did not have the background or skills to develop and use online teaching tools.

There has been a lot of progress in online learning tools, and now there is a better understanding of both students' and teachers' needs. We know that students and teachers alike need ease of access, consistency, and a single platform that fulfills many needs.

Healthcare: Blending the cloud with advanced security

The move away from traditional on-premise and hosted data centre infrastructure to multi-cloud environments has accelerated in the last few years with that trend continuing in 2023. Cloud services, infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS), and software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions offer the innovation, flexibility, and security that healthcare organisations need. Digital communications solutions are foundational to internal, cross-organisation, and patient-centred communications.

In addition to enabling seamless, cross-channel interactions, robust cloud-based healthcare communications solutions provide multi-factor authentication and end-to-end encryption. Hosting data in Australian-based cloud instances ensures healthcare organisations are meeting their data sovereignty obligations, particularly with regards to protecting patients' personal details and keeping them onshore.

RingCentral for Healthcare: A cutting-edge solution

In reviewing these key 2023 healthcare trends, a common theme is a blend of innovation, communications, and systematic approaches to patient care. To meet this convergence head on, a cloud-based communications solution is key.

See how cloud communications can transform your healthcare organisation. Request a demo.

RingCentral Healthcare Solutions

Putting RingCentral on your syllabus

With RingCentral, stay in touch during class, on a walk across campus, or in the lunch queue with team messaging. Run your virtual classes, student club sessions, or staff meetings on one-click HD video meetings. Set up your switchboard to support students with admissions, financial aid, or registration. Start conversations with students across multiple touchpoints like voice, SMS, social, or email.

RingCentral is an all-in-one, cloud-based communications platform optimised with seamless, cross-channel capabilities and the most advanced cloud-based security protocols available. Bring students, faculty, and campus communities together—all in one secure workspace:

RingCentral Education Solutions

About RingCentral

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of business cloud communications and contact centre solutions based on its Message Video Phone™ (MVP®) global platform. More flexible and cost effective than the on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems it replaces, RingCentral helps employees communicate across devices from wherever they are. RingCentral offers three key products. RingCentral MVP® combines team messaging, video meetings, internet phone and other functionalities in a single interface. RingCentral Video®, along with its team messaging feature, enables Smart Video Meetings™. RingCentral Contact Centre™ gives companies the tools they need to connect with customers across channels. These are available on an open platform that integrates with hundreds of third-party apps and makes it simple to customise workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, USA, and has offices around the world.

For more information, please contact a sales representative. Visit ringcentral.com/au/en/ or call 1800 957 188.