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Health Security Systems Australia

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Same destination, new crew for HSSA

Health Security Systems Australia (HSSA), a division of Australian public company DMTC Limited, has announced plans for the transition of the division's leadership.

Dr Leigh Farrell, who has been involved with DMTC since 2015 and has led the division since its establishment in mid-2021, will soon step down from a full-time role and continue with the Division in an advisory capacity. Dr Felicia Pradera, currently HSSA's General Manager, will be the new Head of HSSA with effect from 1 January 2024.

HSSA's mission – to lead and manage collaborative programs that enhance the protection of military and civilian personnel faced with chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) threats, emerging infectious diseases and pandemics – is unchanged.

"Leigh's expertise and experience, and the way he has invested in the capacity and skillsets of the team, has been pivotal to the successful formation and rapid growth of the division," Dr Pradera said.

"With its resolute focus on the development of game-changing technologies and its support for innovative and genuinely collaborative programs and projects, the division is well-positioned to continue to grow."

Taking on the leadership of the division in July 2021 was always intended to be a focused and short-term assignment, Dr Farrell says.

"This transition period isn't a reflection of a change in that plan, this was the plan," Dr Farrell said. "Felicia is highly regarded here and internationally, and is the right person to take the division forward. I'm excited about the prospect of continuing to support the division and contribute to the delivery of specific projects."

Dr Pradera remains on secondment to DMTC from the Department of Defence.

The CEO of DMTC, Dr Mark Hodge, said the division had already played a key role in elevating health security to be acknowledged as an important element of national security.

"The recent diversification of HSSA's portfolio of activities beyond Defence is both timely and eminently sensible, noting that CBR threats to the health of military personnel are also threats to public health and to the civilian first responders deployed as part of any coordinated crisis response," Dr Hodge said. "The division and its partners are doing incredibly important work, and it's entirely consistent with DMTC's efforts for and on behalf of Defence and Government customers, noting the clear focus on partnering in the current strategic environment."

In recent months, the HSSA team has been joined by Dr Emma Prato to lead the Medical Countermeasures (MedCM) Program, Dr Maryanne Spiers to lead projects in the Modelling & Simulation and Sensing Systems programs, and Mark Druss to boost the division's analytics and program management capabilities.

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