



SUBMISSION ON HEALTH IDENTIFIERS 2010 BILL- SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE INQUIRY

Submission by the Health Consumers Alliance Inc of South Australia (HCA)

HCA is a not for profit, independent peak body. We are a membership based organisation with both individual and organisational members who work together to provide a strong, independent and effective health consumer voice in South Australia.

- **Relationship to e health agenda and electronic health records**

Well informed health consumers are generally very committed to the creation of personal e health records and an effective national e-health system. Accordingly HCA appreciates the role of unique health identifiers in achieving this objective and the clear reason why Medicare numbers fail to provide the basis for such a system. Improvements in safety, quality and efficient use of public funds all stand to benefit from a well developed e health record system.

HCA would urge that the legislation proceed as expediently as possible in order to advance this architecture as it is necessary for the building of this system. In addition HCA would urge that a community engagement strategy be implemented as soon as possible to explain the important but limited role of Health Identifiers (HI). At present many consumers assume that an HI equals the establishment of an e health record.

- **Privacy Concerns**

HCA's original submission on the proposed legislation raised some concern about the establishment of the HI Service *before* privacy reform and on the decision not to pursue the supplementary health privacy regulations as recommended by the ALRC.

Consumers are understandably concerned about the use and disclosure of personal information to 3rd parties and for secondary purposes. Fully explained examples are vital to instil confidence that the national privacy principles can adequately protect their sensitive information. The need to understand and inform public and consumer expectations in this area is paramount for the successful adoption the range of health reforms currently under consideration by the Australian Government.

Whilst these concerns still remain, HCA is now satisfied that the immediate legislation is less relevant as these concerns relate more broadly to an actual e health record itself. It would appear that the Individual Health Identifier may in fact provide some improved level of privacy above what currently exists. HCA is also generally satisfied with Medicare Australia as the agency responsible for the creation of the HI Service and the measures being established to protect privacy.

For further information regarding this submission please contact the Health Consumers Alliance of South Australia, Ms. Diana O'Neil, Policy and Research Officer on (08) 8224 5545 or email doneil@hcasasn.au

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