Senate Community Affairs References Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into My Health Records system

20 September 2018

Question no: 1(9)

Type of Question: Hansard, page 9

Question:

CHAIR: Whether now or on notice, could you provide how the trials have gone in terms of people specifically with poor mental health who have used the system? Is that possible? If so, what have been the results? How many opted out? Have people had difficulties? Are they concerned about stigma?
Mr Kelleher: We can take that on notice. I think it's best that the department take that one, because that trial was run in 2016. A report is published on the evaluation of the trial. We'll submit that to the committee and particularly go to the points you're raising. I would need to revisit that report just to be certain that particular groups and their interaction with the record were assessed. But we'll provide a summary for you and the full report.

Answer:

Could you provide how the trials have gone in terms of people specifically with poor mental health who have used the system? If so, what have been the results?

The 'Evaluation of the Participation Trials for My Health Record Final Report' is available on the Department of Health website:
http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/ehealth-evaluation-trials

The purpose of the My Health Record Participation trials was to understand:

- public reaction to an opt-out participation arrangement for the My Health Record;
- the extent to which healthcare provider contribution and use of the My Health Record system improves when the majority of their patients have a My Health Record; and
- any implementation issues that would need to be addressed before any decision is made about future participation arrangements.

The trials included consultation with vulnerable and hard to reach population groups including but not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- elderly people;
- people with a mental health condition;
- people with a chronic disease/condition;
- homeless people; and
- parents with newborns.

Learnings from the trials around the structure and methods of communicating with vulnerable groups, including people with poor mental health, have been implemented during the national opt-out process. This includes ensuring that consumers and healthcare providers are made aware of the benefits of the system and that there are access controls available to protect their healthcare information.

How many opted out? Have people had difficulties?

The final opt-out rate for the trial was 1.9 per cent. There is no data from the trials that indicates that many people with poor mental health chose to opt-out had difficulties in opting out to any greater extent than other people.

Are they concerned about stigma?

There was no data to indicate that people with poor mental health were concerned about stigma during the trials.

The evaluation report noted that some healthcare providers and individuals raised concerns about the confidentiality of health information, including mental health, sexual health, alcohol and drug abuse.

The report also noted that after informing people of the benefits of the My Health Record system and the ability to manage their own privacy settings, nearly all focus group participants advised that their concerns about security and privacy were addressed.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into My Health Records system

20 September 2018

Question no: 2(12)

Type of Question: Hansard, page 11

Question:

Senator SINGH: Can you point to anywhere before the opt-out period where you said 10 per cent?
Ms Edwards: I'm not aware of anything, but we can have a check. But it's not a target that we're going towards. As I mentioned—
Senator SINGH: But I'm asking that specific question.
Ms Edwards: But whether we talked about 10 per cent—
Senator SINGH: You can take it on notice if you don't know.
Ms Edwards: We can take it on notice. I'm not aware of any other time. But 90 per cent of the population is a great place to start to have a record for everyone. That's what we're expecting at least.

Answer:

The Department has not identified any instances before the opt-out period where it publically referred to any national target opt-out rate for the My Health Record.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into My Health Records system

20 September 2018

Question no: 13

Type of Question: Hansard, page 11

Question:

Senator SINGH: Who contacted the Parliamentary Librarian about the My Health record report? Was it the minister or anyone in the minister's office that instructed the department or the agency to make that approach?
Ms Rishniw: My understanding is that the secretary of the Department of Health had a discussion with the Parliamentary Librarian to clarify some points and provide further information on the My Health record and its operation. We will need to take on notice the specifics of any contact.

Answer:

On 23 July 2018 an Australian Parliament Library blog (FlagPost) published an article titled "Law enforcement access to My Health Record data".

The Chief Operating Officer of the Department made initial contact with the Parliamentary Library to express concerns that the article could be misleading and adding to confusion in the public debate. The Secretary of the Department of Health also discussed the article with the Parliamentary Librarian on 25 July 2018 to offer additional information and clarify the operation of My Health Record, particularly in relation to the application of provisions in the *Privacy Act 1988*.

The Parliamentary Library independently decided to remove the article and subsequently informed the Department of its intention to republish an updated version of the article on 26 July 2018. The Department did not at any time request the Parliamentary Library remove the article.