

**Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety**

Chair: Senator Catryna Bilyk
Deputy Chair: Mr Alex Hawke MP

Are Australia's seniors ready for E-health?

Australia's population is getting older, and government is gearing for an increased demand for health care services. But do Australia's seniors have the skills to access ehealth services with the introduction of the online Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR)?

At its public hearing this week in Canberra, Parliament's Select Committee on Cybersafety will ask the Department of Health and Ageing about the benefits of transitioning some of Australia's most vulnerable—the fragile elderly, mothers with babies, and the chronically ill—to the new electronic health record system.

In 2010 the Australian Government dedicated \$467 million to build the PCEHR system, which has the capacity to streamline and co-ordinate treatment for Australia's high need and emergency medical cases.

From July this year, seniors can choose to register through the PCEHR portal, a voluntary service which will give them, nominated carers and medical service providers access to the registrant's full medical records and treatment plans online.

Committee Chair Senator Catryna Bilyk noted that, since July last year, Medicare rebates have been provided to patients in rural, remote and outer regional areas for private specialist consultations via video conferencing.

The next step is to provide doctors and other medical service providers with immediate online access to a consolidated health record. The aim is to ensure the right treatment is given when, and wherever, it is needed.

"Despite the obvious health benefits", the Senator said, "the Committee will want to know what is being done to ensure the integrity and security of this personal health information. It is important to find out how Australia's seniors, especially those over 65 with little experience of the internet, can benefit from moving to an online system."

The Committee's public hearing on **Wednesday 21 March 2012** will commence at **4.15pm in Committee Room 1R5, Parliament House, Canberra.**

Audio of proceedings in Committee Room 1R5 will be webcast on http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament.

If you have views on this matter make a submission. Information on the inquiry, including the terms of reference and for preparing a submission is available from the Committee's inquiry link at: www.aph.gov.au/cybersafety-seniors.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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Background: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 4202