

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

National e-Health Transition Authority (NeHTA)

Budget Estimates 2012-13

Question: 18

OUTCOME 10.2: e-Health

Topic: eHealth Benefits

Senator Boyce asked:

Isn't it just as likely or even more likely that E-Health and things like the PCEHR actually have the potential to increase discrimination and inequality, as, and I quote a study on this recently published in the Australian Health Review that says "as digital inequalities are intertwined with other inequalities, such as poverty and remoteness, and parallel the uneven distribution of chronic disease".

Answer:

The majority of benefit to consumers of participating in the PCEHR is the ability of health professionals involved in their care to share information, provided they are authorised to do so. Registering an eHealth record is free for all people living in Australia. Consumers who have the capability to login to the consumer portal can also benefit from access to this information if they wish, however registration for the system does not require internet access. Consumers can take part by registering at a Medicare shop, via post or over the telephone by calling 1800 723 471..

Whilst the overwhelming majority of Australians have access to the internet, there are also those that have limited access or do not possess the IT literacy to use the internet. However, IT literacy and access to technology are not barriers to participating in the PCEHR program or in benefiting from other eHealth initiatives.

On the ground change activities, through Healthcare communities, eHealth sites and recently announced funding to support Medicare Locals and NACCHO eHealth strategy are aimed at developing readiness of healthcare providers to assist and support consumers to adopt and benefit from eHealth. These initiatives ensure those most vulnerable are provided with access and necessary support and resources to benefit from eHealth.