



E-Health system a costly failure

EXCLUSIVE
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BUREAUCRATS have been sent into hospitals and nursing homes to cajole patients to sign up for an e-Health record their doctors won't be able to use.

Nine months after it was launched, the government's \$1 billion e-Health system holds 414 patient records and is only a fifth of the way towards its target of signing up 500,000 patient users by June 30.

There are now only two hospitals using the personally controlled electronic health record (PCEHR) system. The system is barely operational because fewer than 1 per cent of doctors have signed up for the Healthcare Identifier service number they need to be able to access patient records.

Despite this, Canberra has sent out a sign-up squad in a bid to boost numbers.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said about 12 trained staff had been deployed in hospitals, community clinics and aged care homes in Tasmania and the ACT to sign patients up to the scheme. The move has outraged experts worried about the security of signing a patient up on paper, then re-entering data online.

Launceston Hospital's Professor Terry Hannan, who set up an e-Health record for HIV patients in Africa that was nominated for the Nobel Prize, said patients in his hospital had been asked to hand over Medicare cards and drivers' licences

to get an e-Health record.

"I have a lot of difficulty with this data collection process, not only from patient data security but the real risk of transcription errors in the data recording," he said on the Australian Health Information Technology blog.

"This whole process seems like a political stunt to enhance the PCEHR registration numbers for a project that has been costly and doomed to failure, implementation wise and politically."

Opposition primary health-care spokesman Dr Andrew Southcott said the Coalition was "concerned about the amount of money spent with nothing to show for it".