



—Media Release—

Government's My Health Record, a Privacy Disaster

The Australian Privacy Foundation today said that Federal Government's My Health Record system is a privacy disaster waiting to happen. Its biggest weakness is the Medicare Call Centre with its many operators, all with potential access to My Health Record data.

In 2011 the government promised a "clear and robust framework" for the Health Records Call Centres. Five years later there are no rules or procedures in place, the necessary infrastructure or a robust framework of privacy protection.

"This total failure to deliver on its promise and put in place much needed protections exposes patients to curious Call Centre operators whose prying and spying are unlikely to be detected" said Dr Bernard Robertson-Dunn, chair of the Australian Privacy Foundation's health committee. "This will get even worse if everyone is forced to have a My Health Record, which the Government is trying to do with its opt-out initiative.

"The Government's negligence is breathtaking considering the privacy of Call Centre access to your health data" he said.

Call Centre operators have unlimited access to patient health records to do their jobs; there has been nothing done to properly and adequately protect patient data from misuse by these operators, whether intentional or accidental.

"Health Information is highly attractive to criminals and hackers. This is a serious threat not only to patients but to Call Centre operators themselves who could potentially be pressured by outsiders to reveal health data on targeted individuals." said Dr Robertson-Dunn.

"Prevention is better than cure. Relying on criminal and civil penalties will not protect privacy. It will only punish breaches, where they are detected.

"Acknowledging the privacy and security flaws, and fixing them all, must be the priority. The My Health Record is not safe to use as it stands, especially with the dangerous 'Opt Out' model creating records without prior consent." said Dr Robertson-Dunn.

With such poor privacy protections in place the Australian Privacy Foundation calls on the Australian Government to immediately stop the opt-out registration trials.

It should seriously reconsider the enormous privacy risks of its Call Centre and look at alternative designs that do not require such a potentially intrusive capability. If that means no public access, then so be it.

Dr Robertson-Dunn also said "Australians need to be aware that that the system has other privacy threatening features such as that it is impossible to cancel or remove your record. You can only inactivate it.

"Unfortunately the My Health Records System is like Hotel California 'You can check out any time, but you can never leave' he said.

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For detailed information on the My Health Record Call Centre debacle go to:
<https://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/MyHR/callcentre.html>

For a rundown on all the features of the My Health Record the government doesn't speak of see:
<https://www.privacy.org.au/Campaigns/MyHR/info.html>