



**Australian
Privacy
Foundation**

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<http://www.privacy.org.au/>

25 June 2011

The honourable Tanya Plibersek MP
Email: Minister.Plibersek@health.gov.au

Dear Minister Plibersek

Re: Unemployment benefit application incorporating bundled consent for access to private health information.

I write as Chair of the Health Sub Committee of the Australian Privacy Foundation (APF), the country's leading privacy advocacy organisation.

The APF has recently been contacted by individuals from Queensland who report that recent applications for unemployment benefits asks for enduring bundled consent for Centrelink personnel to obtain, use and disclose their private health records from clinicians and health organisations. Bundled consent refers to a protocol whereby patient consent to a wide range of uses and disclosures of privileged information is bundled into a single authority.¹

This bundled consent authority evidently permits Centrelink personnel and other government staff or agencies under the auspices of the Department of Human Services to use the information and to disclose it to other government agencies, potential employers, medical researchers and to on-sell this information to health data brokers. Individuals contacting the APF have formed the impression that access to unemployment benefits is contingent on their authorization of the bundled consent request.

Hence, I write to clarify whether bundled consent to access health information is a regulation for receiving unemployment benefits and if so, what is the justification for this intrusion and unfettered distribution of private information?

Yours sincerely

Dr. Juanita Fernando
Chair, Health Sub Committee
Australian Privacy Foundation

Contact Details for the APF and its Board Members are at:<http://www.privacy.org.au/About/Contacts.html>

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Dr Fernando is a former councillor of the Australasian College of Health Informatics. <http://www.achi.org.au/>

1. Fernando, J. (2010) The protocols of privileged information handling in an eHealth context: Australia Ed: Quigley, M. ICT Ethics and Security in the 21st Century: New Developments and Applications. IGI Global (Available 23 April 2012) <http://www.igi-global.com/book/ict-ethics-security-21st-century/46180>