



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Dr Juanita Fernando
Australian Privacy Foundation
GPO Box 1196
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Dr Fernando

Patient Access to Healthcare Identifiers-related patient data

Thank you for your letter dated 12 February 2010, regarding the Healthcare Identifiers (HI) Service and arrangements for individuals to access information about them which is held by the Service Operator.

As a result of comments received from public consultation on the Healthcare Identifiers (HI) Bill provisions have been included to ensure that an individual has a right of access to their healthcare identifier. Section 18 of the HI Bill explicitly requires the Service Operator to disclose a healthcare identifier and associated information to the person to whom it relates or to a person responsible for them.

The Privacy Act already imposes an obligation on a private sector organisation to provide an individual with access to any personal information held about them. However, there are restrictions under the Privacy Act on the adoption, use, and disclosure of Commonwealth assigned identifiers by private sector organisations.

To ensure that these restrictions do not prevent patients from obtaining their healthcare identifier, Section 23 of the HI Bill authorises a healthcare provider to disclose an individual healthcare identifier to that individual or a person responsible for them.

There is no provision in the HI Bill that would require personal details linked to a healthcare identifier to be confirmed by a third party.

I hope this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Forman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Liz Forman
Assistant Secretary
eHealth Branch
Department of Health and Ageing
24 February 2010