



**Australian  
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The Editor  
The Australian

Dear Editor

The Australian recently reported the release of the NHHRC E-Health Discussion Paper (Health ministers agree to share patient e-records | Siobhain Ryan | December 06, 2008).

The Discussion Paper refers to submissions from health economists and opinion pieces. But it fails to reflect the evidence-based submissions provided by consumer groups.

Worse, the Paper contains motherhood statements about alleged levels of consumer demand for e-health and the potential economic benefits that might be achieved by delivering quality outcomes to users of health services and clinicians alike. These claims are completely unsupported by evidence.

When the Rudd government was elected, public interest advocacy groups were optimistic. The positive tone was continued by Minister Faulkner when he pointed out that if we want "values - such as privacy - to be 'programmed on the bare metal' of technological development, we will need new and innovative ways of doing so, ways other than legislative fiat ..."  
([http://www.smos.gov.au/speeches/2008/sp\\_20081002.html](http://www.smos.gov.au/speeches/2008/sp_20081002.html)).

On the other hand, the Government's failure to take into account the views of health care consumer advocates suggests that the current Prime Minister may be no different from his predecessor when it comes to protecting patient privacy.

Yours sincerely

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