



## Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Senior Victorians

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OUR REF: ADD/10/50429

YOUR REF:

19 October 2010

Dr Roger Clarke  
Chair  
Board of the Australian Privacy Foundation

Dear Dr Clarke

Thank you for your letter of 8 October 2010 regarding your concerns about patient privacy.

I can assure you that the matters that you raise are taken very seriously when using ICT in the Victorian public health system. Patient privacy and safety is a foremost concern and robust safeguards are implemented to ensure that neither is compromised.

Regarding the privacy of health information within hospitals this is managed locally as health information is held in a wide range of electronic and physical forms within any given institution. Privacy is obviously governed through a range of devices including general and health specific legislation as well as charters such as the Charter of Human Rights. All Victorian hospitals undergo accreditation by the Australian Council of Health Care standards; appropriate management of health information is a material issue for accreditation. Health professionals are subject to the principles of their registration under which privacy is a matter of professional conduct.

Victorian hospitals continually change processes in order to improve quality and safety. Relevant staff must of course reflect on any privacy issues when embarking on process change. I will table your correspondence with the Victorian Health Chief Information Officers by way of a reminder that privacy is an important issue.

Yours sincerely

Andrew P Howard  
Chief Information Officer Health

cc Ms Fran Thorn, Secretary Department of Health  
Mr Lance Wallace, Executive Director, Hospital and Health Service Performance