



## My Health Record privacy strengthened; more time to decide

21 November 2018

Australians now have until 31 January 2019 to decide on whether to participate in the My Health Record system, whose privacy and security settings have been further strengthened.

The Senate's recent decision to pass the *My Health Records Amendment (Strengthening Privacy) Bill 2018* is another step in ensuring the system has the confidence of the Australian public, promotes greater health outcomes and protects the privacy and security of people's health information.

The Bill will now go back to the House of Representatives, which sits again on 26 November 2018. If passed in its current form, it will then be assented and become law.

The extra measures mean Australians' health information will be protected under law in what is an already secure system.

Briefly, the changes will:

- Explicitly prohibit access to My Health Records by insurers and employers.
- Allow the permanent deletion of a cancelled My Health Record.
- Provide greater privacy for teenagers 14 years and over.
- Strengthen existing protections for people at risk of family and domestic violence.
- Provide greater assurances that only government agencies involved in the efficient delivery of My Health Record have access to the system.
- Make clear that the system cannot be privatised or used for commercial purposes.
- Confirm principles contained within the Framework to guide the secondary uses of data will become law (within the My Health Record Rules).

This will be backed up by harsher penalties and fines for inappropriate or unauthorised use.

WA Primary Health Alliance General Manager Bernadette Kenny said the changes reflected recent public debate that highlighted the need for some aspects of the system to be improved.

"The last few months have seen some great discussions on My Health Record, particularly with regard to people who may be more vulnerable, such as those with a mental illness, young people, or victims of domestic and family violence.

"It was vital for their views and those of the groups who advocate for them to be heard and acted upon.

“I urge people to make an informed decision, but in doing so to consider the enormous benefits of having a My Health Record.

“Not only will you have all your important health information at your fingertips, wherever you are and whenever you need to access it, it might just save your life in an emergency as healthcare providers can view any allergies, medicines and immunisations.

“When the majority of Australians have a My Health Record it will be a great step towards making our health system better connected.

“This is important because timely and improved communication between GPs, hospital doctors and staff, and other health professionals will lead to better treatment decisions and health outcomes for consumers, and greatly reduce unnecessary expenditure,” Ms Kenny said.

More than 6 million Australians already have a My Health Record and over 14,000 healthcare professional organisations are connected, including general practices, hospitals, pharmacies, diagnostic imaging and pathology practices.

A summary of the changes is available here <https://www.myhealthrecord.gov.au/news-and-media/my-health-record-stories/legislation-strengthens-privacy>

**ENDS**

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**About WA Primary Health Alliance:** WA Primary Health Alliance oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, hospitals and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit [www.wapha.org.au](http://www.wapha.org.au)