

## CHF supports stronger protection for patient records

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The Consumers Health Forum welcomes the statement by the Prime Minister and Minister Hunt that the Government will move to address concerns about protection of privacy under the My Health Record.

“The success of MHR relies very much on people’s trust that their medical information will be protected,” the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells said.

“Mr Turnbull says if refinements are needed, they would be made. We believe Section 70 of the My Health Records Act 2012 needs to be tightened so that access to medical records for non-healthcare reasons is governed by law and judicial oversight and not left to be subject to agency policy.

“This change should be welcomed by the public and by the system operator as a means of assuring greater certainty concerning access to MHR records.

“The Prime Minister is correct to say that the MHR legislation has had bipartisan support for a long time.

“However since the MHR legislation was first introduced six years ago, community attitudes and concerns about cybercrime and hacking have become much more heightened.

“The safeguards for MHR must reflect community concerns about risk in order to nurture the public trust that MHR depends on to become an effective and central part of a modern healthcare system.

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“As we have said previously, Australia must be more proactive in safeguarding eHealth, as a future crisis could discourage people accessing it for fear of things being recorded they don’t want.

“Perception becomes reality, and consumer fears about privacy and security could lead to people avoiding doctors and disclosing less when they do see them. This is especially important for any marginalised, stigmatised, or discriminated-against group.

“It is also important for the Federal Government be acutely mindful of how fickle community trust and confidence in a system such as My Health Record can be: trust can be slow to build, but quick to erode.

“The Federal Government has our strong backing to act to ensure community trust in MHR.

“CHF continues to strongly support a national electronic health records system because of the substantial improvements it offers in pursuit of safe, efficient and effective healthcare”.

“When remedies can be made to avoid erosion of public confidence and trust in MHR, they should be taken. MHR is a major investment in public health infrastructure that will benefit patients now and into the future. It is in all our interests that we maximise its benefits” Ms Wells said.

**ENDS**

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