

My Health Record must have bipartisan support

MEDIA RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER, 2018

The Consumers Health Forum has welcomed the Government's proposed further reforms to the My Health Record legislation but has called for an extension of next week's deadline for the full-scale introduction of MHR to give time for debate and settle the significant issues affecting public support of the new system.

"The increased penalties, stronger safeguards against domestic violence, new protections against employers compelling employees to show their MHR and prohibition on use of MHR data by insurers are among several key improvements to the scheme," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"The My Health Record is so important to the future of Australia's health care, it is vital its effective start-up is not overshadowed by uncertainty and political disputation.

"The period for people to opt out of MHR is currently set for November 15 which will make it difficult to completely examine the proposed amendments to legislation which now go well beyond the Government's previous revisions which take steps to ensure that law enforcement agencies can only access a record with a warrant or court order and to allow the permanent deletion of records of people opting out.

"The response today of Health Minister Hunt to the recommendations raised by the Senate Committee which inquired into MHR, and by the Opposition and other political parties, relate to important questions of access and security, provision of community education about MHR and secondary use of data generated by MHR.

"We urge our political leaders to work towards an all-party settlement before the opt out deadline is implemented.

"If that is not possible before 15 November, that formal deadline should be extended.

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Consumers shaping health



“Consumer knowledge, trust and confidence is essential for the MHR to become an effective part of modern health care. That is unlikely to occur if there remains high level political disagreement.

“Given the potential for MHR to facilitate faster, more effective, precise and integrated health care, it is well past time that Australians had the benefit of this application of everyday information technology.

“Bipartisanship concerning additional amendments would further strengthen the policy intent, protections and community confidence.

“We have already urged that no records should be created following the opt-out period until the implementation of those amendments is complete.

“The level of community debate and discussion about MHR also highlights the need for much more effective community education about the record and, importantly, how to use it.

“Many Australians are already finding the system beneficial in their circumstances. Providing avenues for better understanding and use of MHR is the essential next step in its ongoing development,” Ms Wells said.

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