

5/3/10

Senate Committee Inquiry into Healthcare Identifiers Bill 2010
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to contribute to the Senate Committee from an innovative Australian company who developed and launched the first personal health record in Australia in Feb 2008.

miVitals Technology was established in 2006 and set out to position consumers at the centre of health through the development of a personal electronic health and lifestyle record. Following trials in 2007, a completed online product was launched in January 2008.

Currently health information is held across many different locations and disparate systems are unable to manage, store and access the multiple records relating to a single consumer. Delays in accessing information is costly, time consuming and fundamentally inefficient. Incomplete health information can be dangerous, incorrect, or even life threatening.

Unique health identifiers are the first step to addressing the centralisation of data, but there are significant concerns about privacy and how access to personal information will be managed. (Patient's privacy must come first. Sydney Morning Herald. January 22-23 2005). Any solution needs to facilitate best practice, be practical, and is not administratively cumbersome. We have observed the community concern that occurred surrounding the Australia Card and then the piloting of HeathConnect (2000) and HealthLink (2006), which resulted in the majority of individuals opting out of the initiative. Hence we saw the need to develop a personal health record so that they could share 'select' information with professionals involved in their care.

The Australian Law Reform Commission identified significant community concerns about not being able to access their own health records. *"I want complete control of the proposed sharing of patient health records. I do not want every health service to know of every medical condition I suffer and I don't want to risk my health to ensure personal privacy by not seeking medical attention for clinical conditions"* (Reviewing Australia's privacy Laws Is Privacy Passe? Australian Law Reform Commission 2007). When consumers administer and govern their own personal health record, many of the concerns about third party privacy issues are overcome, when consumers nominate and authorise access by professionals from a Provider Directory. The legals for miVitals were completed by Blake Dawson, specialists in privacy relating to health.

Psychological research has shown that provision of choice is a critical factor in people taking responsibility for their own behaviour. Therefore when consumers have the option to manage and govern the access to their own information, we are suggesting there will be a much more positive response than to a top down model. Research shows that increased participation in health management will result in improved quality of life and will result in multiple economic benefits for Australia (World Economic Forum, Working Towards Wellness 2007).



This means that any e health initiative needs to provide the option for consumers to check that information is correct, update health or complementary information and monitor their health which is particularly important for those with chronic illness.

Our consultation including advocacy groups, professional colleges, ethicists and a range of health professionals such as GPs, medical specialists, pharmacists and radiologists. We also spoke with a medical indemnity provider and a number of health insurers. There was overwhelming support for consumers being more actively involved in their health. In particular they could see the health and time saving benefits of two way 'sharing' of information. The unique health identifier would facilitate this process of being able to export select information to/from a professional.

Security and risk management is a complex issue and miVitals addresses them on many levels including: technology design and architecture, internal procedures, transmission and encryption of data and hosting in a world class, enterprise environment. miVitals incorporated regular security audits to ensure that rapidly changing technology was as secure as possible. Safeguards were also designed to show the consumer (or member of miVitals) who had accessed their records and which records had been accessed. Provision was also made for consumer to share select information, so if a consumer was seeing a physio about their sore knee, then sharing of their mental health information could be switched off.

miVitals was developed using private funds and provided a free product for people to use, with plans during Stage 2 to deliver premium services to monitor different life-stages and diseases, using a range of interactive tools. miVitals Technology was in the midst of a second capital raising when the GFC struck. This has meant the technology has been warehoused for the moment. We are currently in discussion with a number of groups interested in acquiring the technology.

In the meantime I would be delighted to contribute to the national discussion that takes Australia closer to an Electronic Health Record.

Yours sincerely



Jude Foster

Director

miVitals Technology Pty Ltd