



Australian College of Nurse Practitioners response to:

Parliament of Australia

Health Legislation Amendment (Modernising My Health Record – Sharing by default) Bill 2024

Contact:

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Supporting Nurse Practitioners through advocacy
resources, networking and professional development

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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By online portal: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/OnlineSubmission

Dear Committee Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the **Health Legislation Amendment (Modernising My Health Record – Sharing by Default) Bill 2024**.

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP) is the leading national body representing nurse practitioners. It drives the advancement of nursing practice and strengthens consumer access to healthcare services. Nurse practitioners are uniquely equipped to address unmet healthcare needs within communities and expand access to high-quality care, especially for underserved populations.

Background

Nurse practitioners work in diverse healthcare settings, including primary care^{1,2}, urgent care^{3,4}, emergency services^{1,2}, older person care^{1,2}, mental health^{1,2}, palliative care⁵, critical care areas such as orthopaedics¹, and chronic disease prevention and management such as diabetes.¹ Research consistently demonstrates high levels of patient satisfaction with care delivered by nurse practitioners, which contributes to improved treatment adherence and health outcomes.^{3,5-8} This success highlights the invaluable role of nurse practitioners within the Australian healthcare landscape, representing a significant step towards more effective and cost-efficient healthcare delivery.

The *Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan*⁹, released by the Department of Health in May 2023, outlines strategies to remove barriers to the nurse practitioner's scope of practice. Eliminating legislative and operational barriers that lack a clinical basis and misalign with federal and state legislation is essential for consistency across jurisdictions. National uniformity in legislation empowering nurse practitioners across state and commonwealth instruments is imperative.

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The ACNP strongly advocates for the recognition of nurse practitioners' autonomous role and their capacity to lead healthcare teams across various contexts, including in primary health care. This recognition is essential to advance the nursing workforce, support the modern nursing role, and dispel outdated perceptions.

Our response to the Health Legislation Amendment is as follows.

The ACNP fully endorses Option 1, requiring the two legislative changes outlined in the consultation paper. Part 1 requires prescribed corporations to become registered under the My Health Records Act and to upload prescribed information to the My Health Record system. Part 2 amends the Health Insurance Act to provide that Medicare benefits will no longer be payable for prescribed healthcare services, unless required information is shared to the My Health Record system. The sharing by default requirements in the Bill will ensure consistent and timely health information sharing which aligns with the ACNP's commitment to improving healthcare outcomes and empowering consumers to take control of their health. The ACNP does not support Option 2 – maintaining the status quo.

The ACNP recognises the potential for improved access to health information for both consumers and health care providers through changing the model of sharing diagnostic and pathology reports to a consumer's My Health Record from voluntary to mandatory (by default). This streamlined approach reduces the risk of avoidable adverse outcomes, hospital admissions, and unnecessary duplicate tests. It also promotes the use of evidence-based treatments and interventions, ultimately enhancing patient care.

Furthermore, these changes will result in consumer empowerment. By providing consumers with better access to their diagnostic imaging and pathology reports, they can actively participate in their care and make informed decisions about their healthcare journey. This access allows for more effective discussions with healthcare providers, creating a sense of control over their health and treatment decisions.

In addition, the proposed change to Medicare benefits will compel healthcare providers to share key health information to the My Health record, resulting in more efficient coordination of care. It simplifies access to essential health information, enabling healthcare providers to make well-informed clinical decisions. This approach significantly reduces the burden of duplicate tests, minimizes avoidable adverse outcomes, and enhances the overall quality of care provided to patients. The ACNP appreciates the grace period following the establishment of the requirement to upload, so that providers can upgrade to relevant software, train staff and amend policies/procedures.

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Nurse practitioners, and nurse practitioner led clinics do not have access to incentives and support to establish and maintain access to My Health record. While we acknowledge that nurse practitioners engage effectively with My Health record now, it is imperative that this inequity of access be addressed.

The ACNP acknowledges the Australian Government's dedication to improving the My Health Record system and is pleased to see these suggested legislative changes. The organisation is committed to advocating for policies that prioritise the interests of healthcare providers and, most importantly, the patients they serve. These proposed changes are a significant step towards achieving these goals and the ACNP fully supports their implementation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this important review. We are happy to be contacted to participate further or provide clarification.

Yours sincerely

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