

Optometry Australia's submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs inquiry regarding the My Health Record system

In the 2018–19 Federal Budget, the Australian Government claimed that by 2022, all health care practitioners will be able to use digital technologies and services to interact with patients, use and contribute to their health record and exchange information with the rest of the health system. However, the clinical software optometrists primarily use is currently not compatible with the My Health Record system.

This continuing interoperability between common optometry practice management systems and the My Health Record system means that the benefit of the My Health Record system is limited within optometry, as it is within other allied health professions.

Currently, practicing optometrists can only view a patient's record through the National Provider Portal accessed by a web browser. In order to do so, the optometrist must register with their existing HPI-I number, and the optometrist's organisation (practice, or the optometrist themselves as a sole-trader) must register separately in order to receive a unique HPI-O number. Both numbers are required to access the National Provider Portal. In practice, the process of registering to receive both these numbers is time-consuming, and presents numerous barriers for the optometrist.

Optometry Australia, the peak professional body representing over 80% of optometrists in Australia, has advised the Government that in order to enable broad uptake of the My Health Record amongst optometry, clinical practice software needs to be redesigned so that it is compliant with the system. Upgrading the system comes at a significant cost to the software developer, and experience with software providers for other areas of the health system suggests this is unlikely to occur without financial support from the Australian Government.

Optometry Australia supports the principle of the My Health Record system and shared electronic health records. Optometrists play an important role in the multi-disciplinary team care of a patient, particularly for patients with complex or chronic conditions, including diabetes, and we hope the My Health Record system will become an important enabler for better coordinated care for patients.