

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(75) Output 1.3: Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Nettle (L&C 86) asked:

In relation to the immigration detention standard number 1.4.2.4, can you explain to me which of a detainee's medical records fall into the category of 'medical records not usually provided to a detainee'?

Answer:

A detainee's medical records are available on request subject to exemptions provided for in the National Privacy Principles as listed in Schedule 3 of the *Privacy Act 1988* (see Attachment A – National Privacy Principle 6 - Access and Correction).

A detainee may commence formal proceedings under Freedom of Information Legislation to gain access to medical records that have not been released.

**Extract from *Privacy Act 1988* - Schedule 3 – National Privacy Principles
National Privacy Principle 6 - Access and Correction**

- 6.1 If an organisation holds personal information about an individual, it must provide the individual with access to the information on request by the individual, except to the extent that:
- (a) in the case of personal information other than health information, providing access would pose a serious and imminent threat to the life or health of any individual; or
 - (b) in the case of health information, providing access would pose a serious threat to the life or health of any individual; or
 - (c) providing access would have an unreasonable impact upon the privacy of other individuals; or
 - (d) the request for access is frivolous or vexatious; or
 - (e) the information relates to existing or anticipated legal proceedings between the organisation and the individual, and the information would not be accessible by the process of discovery in those proceedings; or
 - (f) providing access would reveal the intentions of the organisation in relation to negotiations with the individual in such a way as to prejudice those negotiations; or
 - (g) providing access would be unlawful; or
 - (h) denying access is required or authorised by or under law; or
 - (i) providing access would be likely to prejudice an investigation of possible unlawful activity; or
 - (j) providing access would be likely to prejudice:
 - (i) the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of criminal offences, breaches of a law imposing a penalty or sanction or breaches of a prescribed law; or
 - (ii) the enforcement of laws relating to the confiscation of the proceeds of crime; or
 - (iii) the protection of the public revenue; or
 - (iv) the prevention, detection, investigation or remedying of seriously improper conduct or prescribed conduct; or
 - (v) the preparation for, or conduct of, proceedings before any court or tribunal, or implementation of its orders;by or on behalf of an enforcement body; or
 - (k) an enforcement body performing a lawful security function asks the organisation not to provide access to the information on the basis that providing access would be likely to cause damage to the security of Australia.
- 6.2 However, where providing access would reveal evaluative information generated within the organisation in connection with a commercially sensitive decision-making process, the organisation may give the individual an explanation for the commercially sensitive decision rather than direct access to the information.

Note: An organisation breaches subclause 6.1 if it relies on subclause 6.2 to give an individual an explanation for a commercially sensitive decision in circumstances where subclause 6.2 does not apply.

- 6.3 If the organisation is not required to provide the individual with access to the information because of one or more of paragraphs 6.1(a) to (k) (inclusive), the organisation must, if reasonable, consider whether the use of mutually agreed intermediaries would allow sufficient access to meet the needs of both parties.
- 6.4 If an organisation charges for providing access to personal information, those charges:
- (a) must not be excessive; and
 - (b) must not apply to lodging a request for access.
- 6.5 If an organisation holds personal information about an individual and the individual is able to establish that the information is not accurate, complete and up-to-date, the organisation must take reasonable steps to correct the information so that it is accurate, complete and up-to-date.
- 6.6 If the individual and the organisation disagree about whether the information is accurate, complete and up-to-date, and the individual asks the organisation to associate with the information a statement claiming that the information is not accurate, complete or up-to-date, the organisation must take reasonable steps to do so.
- 6.7 An organisation must provide reasons for denial of access or a refusal to correct personal information.