



Media release

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My Health Record opt out date announced

More than five million Australians already have a My Health Record, which provides a summary of their key health information, delivering better health outcomes for patients and their treating doctors and specialists.

Every Australian will be offered a My Health Record unless they choose not to have one during the three month opt out period that will run from 16 July to 15 October 2018.

The My Health Record system and opt out process has the full support of all state and territory governments, who unanimously agreed to this plan in August 2017 at COAG Health Council.

My Health Record also has the unanimous support from Australia's peak health bodies, including the Australian Medical Association, the Royal College of Australian General Practitioners, Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and the Consumers Health Forum.

The protection of patient information is critical and the My Health Record system has strong safeguards in place to protect the health data. It is also subject to some of the strongest legislation in the world to prevent unauthorised use.

Australians can cancel their My Health Record at any time after the end of the opt out period – or create one, if they opted out.

Minister for Health Greg Hunt said My Health Record enables important health information including allergies, medical conditions, treatments, medicines, and test reports to be securely shared between clinicians and their patients. It also enables people to take more control of their own health and wellbeing, manage their children's health, and upload key documents, like advanced care directives.

"My Health Record provides many benefits to patients, including reduced duplication of tests, better coordination of care for people with chronic and complex conditions, and better informed treatment decisions," Minister Hunt said.

"I would encourage each and every Australian to use their My Health Record and to speak with their healthcare providers regarding these benefits."

Today's announcement follows the Government's 2017 Budget allocation of \$374.2 million over two years to expand Australia's digital health system. Australian Digital Health Agency CEO Tim Kelsey welcomed the Australian Government's commitment to building Australia's digital health system.

"The Australian Government is continuing to build on its investment in technology to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians. A top priority in [Australia's National Digital Health Strategy – Safe, Seamless, and Secure](#), is for the national expansion of My Health Record to realise the greatest health benefits.

"My Health Record is about improving healthcare for all Australians," Mr Kelsey said. "My Health Record gives people control over who sees their health information."

Currently, 5.7 million people have a My Health Record and they can access their health information at any time online.



A national communications strategy will be implemented to inform all Australians of the benefits of digital health, and to explain the opt out process. During the opt out period individuals who do not want a record will be able to opt out by visiting the [My Health Record website](#) or by calling 1800 723 471 for phone based assistance.

Forms will be provided on request, and additional support will be provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with limited digital literacy, and those living in rural and remote regions.

The Agency is partnering with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and its state affiliates to raise awareness of My Health Record with healthcare providers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and to provide on the ground support for individuals who choose to opt out.

Australia's 31 Primary Health Networks will also support their local communities with tailored communications on My Health Record, in partnership with consumer and clinical peak bodies and state and territory governments. The benefits will be explained for audiences in both health and non-health settings including GP practices, pharmacies, hospitals, as well as corporate and consumer contexts.

Consumers Health Forum (CHF) CEO Leanne Wells said she welcomed the announcement, as it will give Australians time to learn more about My Health Record, and to consider whether they should opt out of having a record created for them.

"My Health Record is a key step in the shift from health consumers as passive patients, to consumers as active partners in their own care.

"For too long, healthcare has lagged behind in exploiting the clear benefits of information technology to provide prompt, secure, and precise patient information. For these benefits to be realised and a consumer-centred and digitally enabled health care system to become a reality, consumers will need to be involved in using and improving innovations such as My Health Record," Ms Wells said.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) President Dr Michael Gannon has welcomed the announcement.

"The current system of medical records means that we may have incomplete information on a patient – especially if the patient has recently seen another specialist or has been discharged from a hospital. The My Health Record will result in doctors having access to better information, in a more timely fashion, via secure means. Less time chasing up paperwork means more time can be spent treating our patients," Dr Gannon said.

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) President Dr Bastian Seidel said My Health Record can play an important role in improving patients' access to their healthcare information.

"Most Australians are digitally connected and make everyday use of digital services across a range of industries, so it makes sense that both healthcare providers and their patients have access to digital health services.

"The RACGP is supporting GPs to prepare for the My Health Record opt out process and to make informed decisions about the use of the system in their practice," Dr Seidel said.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President Dr Shane Jackson said that My Health Record is a game changer for pharmacists' contribution to enhancing medication safety and ensuring quality use of medicines.



“By integrating the My Health Record system into their practice, pharmacists will be able to optimise the outcomes associated with medicines. The information available in the My Health Record system will allow pharmacists to deliver more effective and efficient care,” Dr Jackson said.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President George Tambassis said that the national expansion of My Health Record will support increased use of the system by pharmacists and sustainable healthcare delivery.

“The Guild is committed to helping build the digital health capabilities of community pharmacies and advance the efficiency, quality, and delivery of healthcare to improve health outcomes for all Australians.

“We are working with the Australian Digital Health Agency to ensure that community pharmacy dispensing and medicine-related services are fully integrated into the My Health Record,” Mr Tambassis said.

Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) CEO Alison Verhoeven said that opt out provides a suitable and appropriate balance between the clinician’s need for information and the patient’s right to privacy.

“While further work is required to fully integrate with hospital clinical information systems, My Health Record now offers a ‘medicines view’ showing patient medications and related information, and an increasing number of clinical documents such as referrals, shared health summaries and pathology and diagnostic imaging reports. This information will empowering clinicians to make timely decisions in consultation with their patients,” Ms Verhoeven said.

After the three month opt out phase, one month will be required to reconcile the data and to finalise processing of paper opt out forms received from Australians living in remote and rural locations, and from people who do not have access to a computer.

The new records will be activated when individuals login for the first time or when healthcare providers access records in treating their patients. Two years of Medicare and PBS data will be uploaded, unless an individual chooses not to include this information.

Individuals will also be able to upload personal notes, advanced care documentation, and medication and allergy information. Authorised healthcare providers using approved clinical information software will also upload health information on allergies, medical conditions and treatments, medicine details, and test results.

“Strict privacy control, set by an individual, is a central feature of My Health Record. Each person can control the information in his or her My Health Record, and the healthcare provider organisations that can have access,” Mr Kelsey said.

Individuals will be able to ask their healthcare provider not to add specific test reports and other medical information to their My Health Record. Individuals can also restrict access to specific information in their record by applying a Limited Access Code to that that specific document – or by applying a Personal Access Code to the entire record.

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Further information

Further quotes from our partner organisations are [available here](#).

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Australian Government

Australian Digital Health Agency

About the Australian Digital Health Agency

The Agency is tasked with improving health outcomes for all Australians through the delivery of digital healthcare systems, and implementing [Australia's National Digital Health Strategy](#) – *Safe, Seamless, and Secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia* in collaboration with partners across the community. The Agency is the System Operator of [My Health Record](#), and provides leadership, coordination, and delivery of a collaborative and innovative approach to utilising technology to support and enhance a clinically safe and connected national health system. These improvements will give individuals more control of their health and their health information, and support healthcare providers to deliver informed healthcare through access to current clinical and treatment information. Further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.