

Dear Senate Community Affairs Committee

The National Association of Practising Psychiatrists (NAPP) has examined the Exposure Draft Healthcare Identifiers Bill and the subsequent summary of proposed regulations for the Healthcare Identifier Service Consultation paper.

NAPP makes the following comments:

This legislation enables the government to assign to each person who receives 'healthcare' a 16 digit electronic Healthcare Identifier. This number will be accessible to many entities, including a broad range of healthcare service providers, with and without patient consent. The Healthcare Identifiers enable linkage with, and retrieval of, each patient's clinical records.

This legislation has important implications for privacy, confidentiality and security of clinical information.

We are concerned that the treatment of people with mental illness will be jeopardized by the reduction of privacy, confidentiality and security due to this legislation.

Our patients expect us to protect their private clinical information in order to assist them to find a meaningful path to recovery.

NAPP is extremely concerned at the overseas experience of electronic medical records and the well publicised breaches of patient privacy and confidentiality.

The ability to treat our patients **will be jeopardised should the use of healthcare identifiers be made compulsory for patient or physician.**

NAPP is concerned that we are seeing phased introduction of healthcare identifiers followed by yet to be determined regulation which will not be available for public debate.

No government action should jeopardise the safety of patients or threaten their vulnerability through enforcement or requirement of them, or their chosen psychiatrist to provide confidential information to a database, even one which claims to be privacy protected.

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