

27 October 2015

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the Health Legislation Amendment (eHealth) Bill 2015. The RACGP recently provided a submission to the Department of Health expressing a number of concerns with the Bill, and I attach a copy of our submission. Our key concerns are as follows:

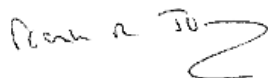
- The RACGP supports the concept of a national shared electronic health record system and welcomed the Government's commitment in the 2015-16 budget to strengthen the national eHealth system. However, there are still significant problems with the design and functionality of the PCEHR (soon to be renamed the My Health Record) which need to be effectively addressed for its successful adoption. Pushing ahead before these issues are resolved jeopardises the entire project.
- There is currently limited evidence that supports the proposition that patients merely having access to their healthcare information leads to significant changes to healthcare outcomes. It is the use by clinicians that will help deliver the benefits of coordinated and integrated care and clinicians are unlikely to use it until design and functionality issues are resolved.
- While there are general practitioners on the steering committee overseeing the implementation of the new Australian Commission for eHealth (ACeH), there is no direct RACGP representative on the committee. The RACGP is ideally placed to guide governments and other stakeholders to ensure they are informed of what is reasonable, workable and useful for general practitioners who will be the primary users of My Health Record.
- As the design of the new opt out model removes the individual's choice, there is a need to ensure that people, and especially those who are socially disadvantaged and those with poor health literacy, are made aware of how to opt out of the system.
- Penalties which may be applied for the misuse of My Health Record appear excessive and unnecessary and will greatly deter use by busy general practitioners. Provisions for penalties already exist within the Australian Privacy Principles so it is not clear why there is a need for additional penalties, civil or criminal, to be imposed.

The RACGP will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to identify a workable solution to the current issues and looks forward to providing further feedback to ensure that major usability issues with My Health Record are resolved for safe use across all of healthcare.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Ms Joanne Hereward,

Program Manager – eHealth at 03 8699 0338 or joanne.hereward@racgp.org.au

Yours sincerely,



Dr Frank R Jones
President