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MEDIA RELEASE

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Personally Controlled Electronic Health Records for all Australians

Australians will be able to check their medical history online through the introduction of personally controlled electronic health records, which will boost patient safety, improve health care delivery, and cut waste and duplication.

The \$466.7 million investment over the next two years will revolutionise the delivery of healthcare in Australia.

The national e-Health records system will be a key building block of the National Health and Hospitals Network.

This funding will establish a secure system of personally controlled electronic health records that will provide:

- Summaries of patients' health information – including medications and immunisations and medical test results;
- Secure access for patients and health care providers to their e-Health records via the internet regardless of their physical location;
- Rigorous governance and oversight to maintain privacy; and
- Health care providers with the national standards, planning and core national infrastructure required to use the national e-Health records system.

Benefits for patients

Patients for the first time will be empowered with easy-to-access information about their medical history - including medications, test results and allergies - allowing them to make informed choices about their healthcare.

They will be able to present for treatment anywhere in the country, and give permission for health professionals to access their relevant history at the touch of a button.

Patients will no longer have to remember every detail of their care history and retell it to every care provider they see. Parents will not have to remember the vaccinations their child has had, and doctors and nurses won't have to thumb through paper records.

Patients will control what is stored on their medical records and will decide which medical professionals can view or add to their files, meaning privacy will be strengthened.

A personally controlled electronic health record will have two key elements:

- a health summary view including conditions, medications, allergies, and vaccinations; and
- an indexed summary of specific healthcare events.

Benefits for health providers and the health system

Poor availability of health information across care settings can be frustrating and time consuming for patients and health professionals alike.

It can also have damaging effects on a patient's health outcomes through avoidable adverse drug events and lack of communication between health care providers.

About 2-3 per cent of hospital admissions in Australia are linked medication errors. It equates to 190,000 admissions each year and costs the health system \$660 million.

About 8 per cent of medical errors are because of inadequate patient information.

Clear, quickly available information will reduce such incidents, avoid unnecessary tests and save scarce health resources.

Implementation of personally controlled electronic health records

Personally controlled electronic health records will build on the foundation laid by the introduction of the Individual Health Care Identifiers later this year. Under this, every Australian will be given a 16-digit electronic health number, which will only store a patient's name, address and date-of-birth. No clinical information will be stored on the number, which is separate to an electronic health record.

Implementation will initially target key groups in the community likely to receive the most immediate benefit, including those suffering from chronic and complex conditions, older Australians, Indigenous Australians and mothers and newborn children.

This investment includes funding for the first two years of the individual electronic health record business case developed in consultation with all states and territories and the National Electronic Health Transition Authority (NEHTA).

Subject to progress in rolling out the core e-Health infrastructure, the Government may consider future investments, as necessary, to expand on the range of functions delivered under an electronic health record system.

Reforms to take health system into 21st century

A national e-Health records system was identified as a national priority by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the draft National Primary

Health Care Strategy. It was also supported by the National Preventative Health Strategy.

The Government's reform plans in primary, acute, aged and community care also require a modern e-Health infrastructure. It is a key foundation stone in building a health system for the 21st century.

A personally controlled electronic health record will not be mandatory to receive health care. For those Australians who do choose to opt in, they will be able to register online to establish a personally controlled e-Health record from 2012-13.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220