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MEDIA RELEASE



Privacy is key: new legislation and general practice

The General Practice Data Governance Council met in Canberra in December 2009 to progress the key data governance agenda related to health privacy.

The peak general practice organisations have formed the General Practice Data Governance Council, a new body to oversee the use of general practice data collected from participating practices, in August 2009.

A briefing was provided about the proposed new privacy legislation and its impact on general practice by senior staff from the office of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The major focus was on proposed reforms to the *Privacy Act* that will see a single set of privacy principles across the public and private sectors, and all jurisdictions. This would streamline the current situation where public organisations are covered by the Information Privacy Principles and the private sector, including general practices, by the National Privacy Principles.

This places the Council in a strong position to progress work regarding the governance of general practice data and continue a dialogue which was requested and welcomed by all present.

"I am delighted that not only have the designers of this complex but innovative re-design sought to brief us, but they remain committed to a real and practical engagement with health practitioners who have to use and adopt this legislation," said Council chair, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal.

The primary work of the General Practice Data Governance Council is to ensure that health practitioners have sound, ethical and grounded principles from which to take guidance about the use of general practice data.

The Council has been formed in response to the many data transfer activities currently planned or taking place in Australia, and is committed to profession led governance regarding the issues of data collection activities in general practice.

"Data collection, storage and management have to be agreed by the general practice community with its understanding of the key drivers of privacy, confidentiality, safety, quality, ethics and accuracy", said Dr Haikerwal.

The Council includes representatives from the Australian Association of Practice Managers (AAPM), the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN), the Australian Medical Association (AMA), the Australian Practice Nurses Association (APNA), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Rural Doctors Association Australia (RDAA) and a consumer representative nominated by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF).

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