



Patient Privacy Policy

Northeast Health Wangaratta

Policy No: ADM-PAT P006	Version No: 2	Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer
Implementation Date: 3 May 2004	Reviewed: 9 October 2006 Next Review Due: 9 October 2008	Authorised by:

Purpose:

Protecting your privacy - Northeast Health Wangaratta is committed to protecting your privacy. We are required by law to protect personal and confidential information such as information relating to your health and other personal details. We comply with all Victorian legislation relating to confidentiality and privacy, including, where relevant, the Health Services Act 1988 (Vic), and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

Procedure:

- We cannot use or disclose information of a personal nature, except to the extent that this is required, authorised or permitted under law. All our staff are required to be trained and understand their obligations under the laws relating to maintaining your privacy.
- We will only collect health information that is necessary for us to perform our functions. We will always try to do so in a fair, lawful and non-intrusive way. Wherever possible, we will collect information directly from you rather than from third parties. We will do our best to tell you if we collect information about you from a third party.
- When we collect information from you we will tell you why we are collecting it, any law that requires it to be collected, the organisations or type of organisations to whom we usually would disclose it and the consequences for you if the information is not provided. We try to set this information out in any form in which we ask for health information to be provided.
- It is impracticable for us to allow you to be anonymous when you attend, but we will allow you to use another name (which we link in our database with your legal name) if you need to protect your identity.
- Generally, we collect and use your information for the purpose of providing care and treatment to you and for purposes directly related to providing such care and treatment. When approached by other health care providers for information about you, we first ask for your written consent. If you have not given this we may still disclose your information to other health care providers for the purpose of providing further treatment to you. We may also use your information for other purposes which are permitted under the privacy laws. Examples of when we are allowed to use or disclose information about you include: to a court in compliance with a summons or



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court order or where there is a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare or a serious threat to public health, safety or welfare. This includes providing information to Child Protection when requested. Aside from where the law specifically allows us to use or disclose health information, we do not use or disclose such information for purposes which are unrelated to the purposes for which we collected the information, without your consent.

- Religion – it is optional for you to tell us your religion, but if you do so you will be asked to consent to your name appearing on a list that is given to the pastoral care workers for each denomination and you may be visited during your stay.
- We do everything we can to make sure that the information we hold about you is accurate, complete and up to date. We are required under the *Public Records Act* to hold some records for extended periods (sometimes as long as 25 years). We will not keep information longer than we need to. From time to time we conduct audits of our records and databases to ensure that the information we hold is accurate and up to date.
- Access to our record keeping and computer systems is controlled. Our staff and authorised external users only have access to systems that their duties require. Our physical or paper records are securely stored and can be accessed only by authorised personnel. Our use of logon codes uniquely identify individual users to ensure that access is appropriately authorised. Staff not using individual codes only have limited access.
- Any individual or organisation (such as an outside service contractor), who is seeking access to health information held by Northeast Health Wangaratta is required to sign a confidentiality agreement. When entering into an agreement, the recipient agrees that the information will only be used and disclosed in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the agreement. However, if you authorise us in writing to release the health information to another individual or organisation, then a confidentiality agreement is not required.
- If you ask us, we will give you access to information we hold about you. However, there are some exceptions to this. For example, we do not have to give you access to health information we hold about you where doing so would unreasonably disclose information relating to others or where the information would otherwise be exempt from disclosure by law.
- We may from time to time transfer health information about you to organisations outside Victoria for the purpose of the provision of care or treatment to you. We will only do this where you consent, where we believe



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that the recipient organisation is subject to binding privacy obligations that are substantially similar to the ones under which we operate, or where it is in your interests for us to do so (and it is impracticable to obtain your consent, and if we were able to ask, you would be likely to give consent).

- We ensure that any suspected infringements of privacy are thoroughly investigated. Disciplinary action is taken in cases where investigations or suspected infringements of privacy are proven.

If you:

- want to have access to health information we hold about you;
- believe information we hold about you is inaccurate and would like to request that it be amended;
- want to know more about the type of information we hold, for what purposes and how we deal with that information; or
- have concerns that we may have infringed your privacy rights,
you should contact: **The Privacy Officer** on 5722 0281

References:

Health Services Act 1988 (Vic)

Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)