Privacy POLICY

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline how Hume Medical Centre complies with confidentiality and privacy obligations. As an organisation, Hume Medical Centre's principal concern is and always will be the health of patients who visit our practice. A high level of trust and confidentiality is required to ensure the confidence of the patients we serve.

*Patients will be assured that:*

- their privacy will be protected when visiting the Medical Centre,
- the information collected and retained in our records is correct and up-to-date, and
- that they can access their information for review.

## Health information

Hume Medical Centre recognises that the information we collect is often of a highly sensitive nature and as an organisation we have adopted the highest privacy compliance standards relevant to Hume Medical Centre to ensure personal information is protected.

For administrative and billing purposes, and to enable the patients to be attended to by other medical practitioners at Hume Medical Centre, patient information is shared between the medical practitioners and other health providers at the medical centre. Hume Medical Centre and the medical practitioners may collect personal information regarding patients (including health information) for the purpose of providing medical services and treatment.

***Personal information collected will generally include*:**

- the patient's name, address, telephone number and Medicare number,
- current drugs or treatments used by the patient,
- previous/current medical history, including, where clinically relevant, a family medical history, and
- the name of any health service provider or medical specialist to whom the patient is referred, copies of any letters of referrals and copies of any reports back.

***Hume Medical Centre may access information:***

- provided directly by the patient,
- provided on the patient's behalf with the patient's consent,
- from a health service provider who refers the patient to medical practitioners providing services at or from Hume Medical Centre, or from health service providers to whom patients are referred.

**Use or disclosure of personal information**

Personal information collected by Hume Medical Centre may be used or disclosed:

- for the purpose advised to the patient at the time of collection of the information,
- as required for delivery of the health service to the patient,
- as required for the ordinary operation of our services (i.e. to refer the patient to a medical specialist or other health service provider),
- as required under compulsion of law, or
- where there is a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health, or safety; or a serious threat to public health or public safety.

Hume Medical Centre may use or disclose personal information for quality assurance, training, billing, liaising with government offices regarding Medicare entitlements and payments and as may be required by the Medical Centre's insurers.

***Accuracy of your information***

Hume Medical Centre is committed to ensuring your information is accurate and has processes in place to ensure that the accuracy of this information is maintained. If you believe that the personal information the Medical Centre holds about you is inaccurate, please inform Medical Centre staff when next attending the Centre.

***Security of information collected***

Other than as described in this Policy or permitted under privacy principles, Hume Medical Centre uses its reasonable endeavours to ensure that identifying health information is not disclosed to any person unnecessarily or irresponsibly.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information collected by the Medical Centre to provide its services, extra precautions are taken to ensure the security of that information. Information may be stored electronically and / or in hard copy form. All electronically stored files are password-protected on several levels, and regular backups of data are performed.

Hume Medical Centre requires its employees to observe obligations of confidentiality in the course of their employment with all staff/contractors signing Confidentiality Agreements.

**How long are medical records kept?**

Hume Medical Centre keeps health information for a minimum of 7 years from the date of last entry in the patient records unless the patient is / was a child in which case the record must be kept until the patient attains or would have attained 25 years of age.

**Accessing your health information**

On request, you may have access to your medical record held by Hume Medical Centre, except in circumstances where access may be denied under the 'Privacy Act' or other laws. For example, access can be denied when letting a patient see their records would pose a serious threat to the patient's life or health, or the life or health of someone else (such as a relative, the health service provider, staff or other patients).

The threat must be significant, for example where there is a serious risk the patient may cause self-harm or harm to another person if they saw the information. The threat can be a risk of danger to physical or mental health but does not need to be imminent – it can be a serious threat that might occur sometime after access is granted.

***Can I transfer my medical records to a new medical practitioner?***

Yes, patients have the right to attend a medical practitioner of their choice and are free to leave a practice and attend another if they wish.

***How do I arrange this?***

There is a professional obligation for a medical practitioner to provide a new treating medical practitioner with all of the information that they need to take over a patient's care.

This is usually done by the patient completing a 'transfer of file' form and producing an original source of identification for the receptionist to make a copy of.

When a patient requests that their health records be transferred to a medical practitioner outside Hume Medical Centre, the medical practitioner has an obligation to provide a copy or summary of the patient health record in a timely manner to facilitate care of the patient.

For medico-legal reasons, our practice retains the original record and provides the new medical practitioner with a summary or a copy. If a summary of the patient's health record is provided to the new medical practitioner, a copy of the summary should be kept on file for record purposes.

A patient can also have a copy of his/her medical records transferred by asking the new medical practitioner to arrange for the transfer of records from the previous treating medical practitioner. The patient will still have to attend Hume Medical Centre to fill in appropriate forms.

***Can the doctor charge for the handing over of medical records?***

Some medical practitioners may charge a fee for handling and copying their records to cover the administrative costs involved. The previous medical practitioner may charge a fee for providing a summary, especially if a patient's medical history is long and/or complex.

**Website privacy**

Hume Medical Centre's website contains links to other sites. Please be aware that Hume Medical Centre is not responsible for the privacy practices of any linked sites. We encourage users who leave our site to read the privacy statements of each and every linked website that they choose to visit. All links to external sites are provided for your convenience. The information, products and advertisements contained in the linked sites are neither approved nor endorsed by Hume Medical Centre, and Hume Medical Centre is not responsible for such information, products or advertisements.

Your privacy is important to us, and we want you to feel comfortable visiting our website. Any personal information that patients given to us, including e-mail addresses, will be used only in the following ways:

- personal data given to us by you will be securely stored,

- we will not provide your personal data to any third party without your permission,
- we do not automatically collect your personal e-mail address simply because you visit our site,
- if we join with a third party to provide services and you sign up for those services, we will share your name and other contact information necessary for our partner to provide the services to you,
- if you view specific pages or download information from specific pages on our website, we will track and add the number of your visits to the aggregate number of visits by all users in order to better design our website,
- we may share aggregate demographic information with our affiliates. This is not linked to any personal information that can identify you or any other visitor to our web site.

By using Hume Medical Centre's website, you consent to the collection and use of your personal information as detailed in this Privacy Policy. We will post any changes to this Privacy Policy on our website so that you are kept up to date with the type of information we collect and the ways in which we use it.

***Changes to the Privacy Policy***

Hume Medical Centre has the right to change the Privacy Policy at any time. If there are updates to Hume Medical Centre's Privacy Policy, we will address the changes promptly and update the revision date of this document.

**Obtaining further information**

If patients require more information regarding Hume Medical Centre, its services and facilities, they can:

- ask a staff member,
- access Hume Medical Centre's website, or
- take a copy of Hume Medical Centre's 'Practice Information Sheet' located in the waiting room.

**Contact information**

If you have any queries regarding our Privacy Policy, please contact:

The Principal Doctor or Practice Manager
Hume Medical Centre
103 Glengala Road, Sunshine West-3020

or email to pm@humemedical.com.au

**Disclaimer**

While we make every effort to protect your privacy, we may need to disclose personal information when required by law where we have a good-faith belief that such action is necessary to comply with a current judicial proceeding, a court order or legal process served on our company or site.