

23 March 2012

The Chair
Justice and Electoral Select Committee
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Privacy (Information Sharing) Bill

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) is New Zealand's largest medical organisation and has a pan professional membership. We have around 5,000 members who come from all areas of medicine including specialists, general practitioners, doctors-in-training and medical students.

The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and promote:

- professional unity and values, and
- the health of all New Zealanders.

The key roles of the NZMA are to:

- provide advocacy on behalf of doctors and their patients
- provide support and services to members and their practices
- publish and maintain the Code of Ethics for the profession
- publish the New Zealand Medical Journal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Privacy (Information Sharing) Bill. We note that the main changes are that:

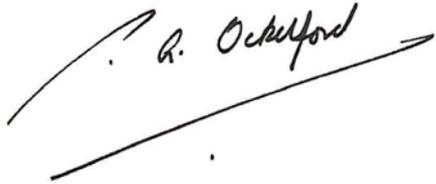
- a) the exceptions to information privacy principles 10(d) and 11(f) have been widened to allow for information sharing to occur when there is a serious threat to public health or safety or the life or health of an individual without the further need for the threat to be imminent
- b) the bill sets out a process for drawing up information sharing agreements to be approved by Orders in Council.

The NZMA acknowledges the need to strike a balance between the sharing of information to support and facilitate the delivery of public services, and the need to protect individual privacy and the proposal for information sharing agreements, with oversight by the Privacy Commissioner should ensure that both are taken into account and appropriate decisions made.

The NZMA is also pleased that the Bill will allow information sharing where there is serious concern for public or individual safety without that threat having to be imminent. This provision will be an important enabler of strategies that are currently being discussed to address the issue of child abuse in the New Zealand and the needs of all vulnerable groups and populations.

The NZMA does not wish to appear in support of our submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Ockelford". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

Dr Paul Ockelford
NZMA Chair