

Media release

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My Health Record empowering older Australians to travel with peace of mind

Australia's peak body representing the interests of older people has urged retirees travelling Australia to consider the benefits of a My Health Record.

For many Australians, retirement signals the start of a new and exciting period of life. More free time brings the opportunity to travel the country. But if you have health problems, travelling as an older person can be complicated.

"My Health Record is a secure online summary of your important health information that can help," said Ian Yates, chief executive of COTA Australia, the peak organisation advancing the rights, interests and futures of Australians as they age.

"It gives you access to your medical history — and having this kind of information at your fingertips when travelling is important and convenient."

Living on the road means sometimes visiting a new doctor is necessary, as local North Richmond couple Ray and Lorraine Gardner discovered when they started travelling.

"We used to always print out our records of what medication we took, what operations, but when My Health Record's come along ... we thought it was the best thing" Ray says.

Having a My Health Record means while they're travelling, Ray and Lorraine can easily share important health information — including prescriptions, test results, allergies and any other information they choose to upload — with new doctors, pharmacists or health professionals.

The Nepean Blue Mountains was one of only two regions in Australia included in the 2016 My Health Record Opt-Out Trial and as a result, over 95% of our residents already have a My Health Record.

Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, led the trial in 2016 and continue to work with primary healthcare providers in the region to encourage the use of My Health Record.

"Being almost two-years ahead of the rest of Australia has given people in our region, like Ray and Lorraine, the opportunity to experience the advantages of My Health Record and to share that knowledge with the rest of the country," says Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay.

"With My Health Record, the big plus I find is that when we're travelling — Lorraine, being allergic to penicillin, if she's in a hospital, and they know her name, and they can look up the records ... they're not going to give her penicillin," Ray says.

"If you're travelling, the doctor doesn't know you, or the hospital doesn't know you. But if they can look it up, I think it's a big plus."

Ray himself has diabetes and has also been treated for melanoma — all of which has been noted in his My Health Record, so doctors can easily access the information, wherever he happens to be travelling.

It also means if you're unable to tell your story during an emergency, that information is ready and waiting for your doctor online, explained Professor Meredith Makeham, Chief Medical Advisor for the Australian Digital Health Agency.

“And in an emergency, clinicians knowing about your healthcare conditions can be lifesaving,” she says.

Lorraine says having a My Health Record helps give her peace of mind — so she can get on with enjoying her holidays.

“I think you do need it. Even if you are a young person with no children, it doesn't matter ... it's definitely good, especially if you have an accident.” **ENDS**

PLEASE NOTE: Interviews with Ray and Lorraine Gardner are available on request.

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About Nepean Blue Mountains PHN

The Nepean Blue Mountains PHN is a program run by Wentworth Healthcare – a not for profit organisation which works to improve health for the communities of Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith. This service has been made possible through funding provided by the Australian Government under the PHN Program