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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**E Health to Deliver a Better, More Efficient System**

Patient care will be improved and inefficiency in the health system will be cut by new e-health legislation soon to be introduced by the Rudd Government.

Today I visited Medicare Australia to see first hand how the secure e-health system currently being developed will work for patients and health care professionals.

The demonstration clearly showed how useful tools like electronic health records, medications-management systems and electronic clinical messaging (discharge, referrals, pathology, and prescriptions) will help improve delivery of health care – particularly when patients are being cared for by multiple providers.

The first step in creating an e-health system will come into effect in the middle of the year when unique healthcare identifiers are assigned to all health consumers as well as to health professionals and the organisations that provide health care in Australia.

The unique healthcare identifiers will be available on a secure system, operated by Medicare Australia.

These identifiers will be provided in addition to Medicare numbers, as a further step to ensure the security of the system. Legislation to underpin this work – the Healthcare Identifiers Bill 2010 - will be introduced to Parliament in the first half of this year. The draft legislation is available for comment at [www.health.gov.au/ehealth/consultation](http://www.health.gov.au/ehealth/consultation).

The Rudd Government is committed to continuing implementation of eHealth to support a more effective health system, and the Council of Australian Governments provided \$218 million to fund the National E-Health Transition Authority to 2012.

Today I also held a roundtable consultation with eHealth organisations and professionals to discuss the Reform Commission's eHealth recommendations.

The views of these key eHealth stakeholders are important as we consider the NHHRC recommendations, and in developing strong foundations for Australia's eHealth - such as unique 'healthcare identifiers' and secure messaging standards.

Today's roundtable was the Government's 91<sup>st</sup> consultation across the country to road-test the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's proposed reforms.

All Australians are also able to send in their comments and contribute to the national debate on our health system via the [yourHealth.gov.au](http://yourHealth.gov.au) website.

**For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.**