

Healthcare Identifiers Service

Annual Report 2023–24



Australian Government



Services
Australia



Acknowledgement of Country

Services Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live on. We pay our respects to all Elders, past and present, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations.



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Contents

Chief Executive Officer's introduction	4
Introduction	5
About the HI Service	5
Our responsibilities as the HI Service operator	6
The year in review	7
Activities and improvements	7
Assignment of healthcare identifiers	8
Disclosure of healthcare identifiers for authorised purposes	10
Disclosure of healthcare identifiers for individuals	10
Disclosure of healthcare identifiers for healthcare providers and organisations	11
Provision of Healthcare Provider Directory	11
Policies, processes and systems used to operate the HI Service	12
Interactions with software developers and contracted service providers	13
Service level results	14
Improved information to support the HI Service	15
Operating statement	16
Security, privacy and confidentiality	17
Online security	17
Privacy management procedures	17
Dealing with breaches	18
Audits and reviews	18

Chief Executive Officer's introduction



As Chief Executive Officer of Services Australia and Chief Executive Medicare, I'm pleased to share a summary of the 2023–24 performance of the Healthcare Identifiers Service (HI Service).

The HI Service is unique and pivotal to the success of healthcare interoperability. It supports safe, secure, and efficient care, with an ecosystem of connected providers conveniently and seamlessly sharing high-quality data.

Services Australia works in partnership with the Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Digital Health Agency to deliver improvements in line with the Australian Digital Health Agency's National Healthcare Identifiers Roadmap and National Healthcare Interoperability Plan.

In 2023–24 financial year, there was continued growth in active identifiers and increased connections. As part of the government's healthcare modernisation, this year, we've continued to prepare for the future of healthcare identifiers across health, aged care and disability sectors.

In line with the need for cyber security uplift across the board, we've helped customers with older certificates transition to a more digitally secure system. We've also been pleased to support the Services Australia life events birth of a child pilot, connecting children to digital health services earlier.

I extend my gratitude to our partners who collaborate with us on modernising and I thank HI Service staff who continue to provide simple and helpful services for our digital health customers.

In accordance with the *Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010*, I present the 2023–24 HI Service Annual Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Hazlehurst', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Hazlehurst

Chief Executive Medicare
Chief Executive Officer
Services Australia



Introduction

Services Australia administers the Healthcare Identifiers Service (HI Service) on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments. We deliver it under an agreement with the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA).

The *Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010* (HI Act) and Healthcare Identifiers Regulations 2020 set the framework and rules for the HI Service.

This annual report captures the details of our activities, finances and operations for 2023–24.

ABOUT THE HI SERVICE

The HI Service is a national system for identifying people, healthcare providers and healthcare organisations. It's a foundational service for digital health in Australia and ensures health systems match information with the right patient and provider at the point of care. The best health systems in the world use a single patient identifier and the HI Service provides that identifier for people in Australia.

The HI Service assigns people, healthcare providers and healthcare organisations a unique 16-digit number. This allows electronic systems across the national healthcare system to identify them correctly.

People are assigned a healthcare identifier when they enrol in Medicare. People who aren't eligible for Medicare can register for a healthcare identifier online or submit a paper form.

Information linked to a healthcare identifier is limited to demographic details such as name, date of birth and gender. The identifier doesn't contain healthcare information.

Healthcare providers are assigned a healthcare identifier either by:

- 1 the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) on behalf of the HI Service
- 2 applying directly to the HI Service if they're not registered by one of the national boards supported by Ahpra.

Healthcare organisations can request a healthcare identifier by applying directly to the HI Service.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE HI SERVICE OPERATOR

As the HI Service operator our responsibilities are to:

- assign healthcare identifiers to people, healthcare providers and healthcare organisations
- assist people who aren't eligible for Medicare to link and use the Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) Service in myGov
- work with Ahpra to maintain a single, complete record of provider healthcare identifiers
- administer secure processes for sharing healthcare identifiers with healthcare providers, healthcare organisations and contracted service providers
- disclose healthcare identifiers to contracted service providers that help manage health information for healthcare organisations
- disclose healthcare identifiers to healthcare providers and healthcare organisations
- keep a log of every time a healthcare identifier is accessed or retrieved
- maintain the Healthcare Provider Directory (HPD)
- share information with key stakeholders about the HI Service
- provide ADHA with reports about the finances and operations of the HI Service
- supply ADHA with data and analytical information to help identify areas for service improvement for our users.

The year in review

ACTIVITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Activities and improvements to the HI Service in 2023–24 focused on preparing for the expanded use of healthcare identifiers across healthcare programs and services, which has been accelerated due to various government initiatives.



The HI Service supports initiatives outlined in strategic plans, reports and projects. These include:

- 1 National Healthcare Interoperability Plan
- 2 Digital Health Blueprint 2023–2033 and associated Action Plan
- 3 National Digital Health Strategy 2023–2028 and associated Delivery Roadmap
- 4 National Healthcare Identifiers Roadmap 2023–2028
- 5 Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan
- 6 Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report.

The HI Service provides the common identifiers needed to link health information, programs and services for customers, their healthcare providers and healthcare organisations.

Services Australia has been working in partnership with the Department of Health and Aged Care (the Department) and ADHA on a range of short and long-term activities to support the Government's agenda to improve connected care for all Australians. These activities include:



the Department's Healthcare Identifiers Framework Project.

The project aims to put in place amendments to the HI Act and related policies to enable expanded use of healthcare identifiers across health, aged care and disability sectors.



the implementation of deliverables under the ADHA's National Healthcare Interoperability Plan.



The Plan outlines activities to update policies, systems and education material that underpin use of healthcare identifiers and aligns with the Healthcare Identifiers Framework Project.






participation in the Council for Connected Care led by ADHA.

33 leaders in digital health from across government (federal and state) and peak bodies, come together to facilitate, promote and support the digital health agenda.

Services Australia has participated in stakeholder engagement sessions with various government departments, including state jurisdictions and health professional associations to:

-  identify barriers in using healthcare identifiers under the existing legislation
-  work through issues and determine possible solutions.

During 2023–24, Services Australia implemented changes to support the operation of the HI Service by:

-  updating the HI Service system to allow healthcare providers to improve healthcare identifier match rates, specifically targeting people from remote and rural communities
-  supporting customers to transition from old to new Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) certificates used to authenticate to the HI Service. The PKI transition changes included:
 - moving from National Authentication Service for Health (NASH) PKI SHA-1 certificates to the more digitally secure NASH SHA-2 in a staged implementation approach
 - moving any customers still using Medicare PKI certificates to access the HI Service to NASH PKI SHA-2 certificates.
-  continuing to support the life event of birth of a child for earlier connectivity to digital health services.

ASSIGNMENT OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS

The HI Act defines 3 types of healthcare identifiers:

- 1** Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) – for healthcare recipients
- 2** Healthcare Provider Identifier–Individual (HPI-I)
– for individual healthcare providers
- 3** Healthcare Provider Identifier–Organisation (HPI-O)
– for healthcare organisations.

Organisations with an HPI-O can create a hierarchy or network of HPI-Os according to their requirements. For example, multiple specialised business areas in a healthcare organisation.

There was continued growth in active identifiers and increased connections using the HI Service in 2023–24. During the year we:



assigned **619,070** healthcare identifiers to people



collected or assigned **59,674** healthcare identifiers for healthcare providers



assigned **3,573** healthcare identifiers to healthcare organisations



assigned **9** registration numbers to contracted service providers



published **458** entries in the HPD for consenting healthcare providers



published **3,411** entries in the HPD for healthcare organisations



responded to **22,131** enquiries from people and healthcare providers. Enquiries included requests for healthcare identifiers and questions about registering with the HI Service.

Table 1: Number of identifiers assigned

Identifiers	2022–23	2023–24	% change since 2022–23	1 July 2010 to 30 June 2024
Assigned IHIs	536,425	619,070	15.40%	32,225,905
Assigned HPI-Is	55,511	59,674	7.50%	1,145,207
Assigned HPI-Os	3,230	3,573	10.62%	31,253

Refer to Table 2 for the change in assigned identifiers for people who aren't eligible for Medicare.

Table 2: Number of IHIs assigned to people who aren't eligible for Medicare

IHIs	2022–23	2023–24	% change since 2022–23	1 July 2010 to 30 June 2024
Assigned IHIs	90,999*	109,995	20.87%	1,078,738

This is a subset of the number of identifiers assigned in Table 1.

*Revised data for 2022–23 provided.

DISCLOSURE OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS FOR AUTHORISED PURPOSES

Under the HI Act, we're authorised to disclose healthcare identifiers to:

- healthcare providers to communicate and manage patient information as part of their healthcare
- people who want to know their own healthcare identifier
- registration authorities to assign healthcare identifiers to their registrants
- entities that issue security credentials to authenticate a provider's identity in electronic transmissions
- the My Health Record System Operator for the My Health Record system.

DISCLOSURE OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Registered healthcare providers and healthcare organisations access their patient's IHI when their health system software interacts with the HI Service. This interaction occurs using appropriate software and approved authentication technology through an authorised web service channel.

People can also access their own IHI:

- by contacting Services Australia
- through their Medicare Online Account in myGov or Express Plus Medicare mobile app for those enrolled in Medicare
- using the IHI Service in myGov for people not eligible for Medicare.

Each time the HI Service discloses an IHI, it counts as a disclosure under the HI Act. A healthcare provider may search for their patient's IHI each time they have an appointment. Each search counts as a disclosure.

Table 3: Number of IHIs disclosed

IHI disclosures	2022–23	2023–24	% change since 2022–23
IHIs disclosed by telephone and service centres	4,666	2,101	-54.97%
IHIs disclosed through web services	511,074,278	714,798,342	39.86%

DISCLOSURE OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND ORGANISATIONS

In 2023–24, we disclosed 1,233,091 HPI-Is and HPI-Os in accordance with our obligations under the HI Act. We made the disclosures to entities that authenticate healthcare providers and organisations in digital health transmissions.

Table 4: Number of HPI-Is and HPI-Os disclosed

HPI-I and HPI-O disclosures	2022–23	2023–24	% change since 2022–23
HPI-Is and HPI-Os disclosed via web services	909,901	1,233,091	35.52%

PROVISION OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Healthcare providers and healthcare organisations use the HPD to access information about each other.

During 2023–24, the number of published healthcare provider and organisation details increased by **3,869**. This brought the total number of entries published since 1 July 2010 to **48,551**.

POLICIES, PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS USED TO OPERATE THE HI SERVICE

The HI Service operates with well-defined policies, procedures, processes and systems.

POLICIES AND PROCESSES

HI Service operational policies and procedures are available for staff who manage enquiries from people and healthcare providers. We review these documents every 6 months or when changes are required, whichever occurs first.

HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

We maintain systems that contain:

- IHI information – demographic details and addresses
- HPI-I information – demographic details, contact details and field of practice
- HPI-O information – organisation names, contact details and services provided.
We also capture demographic details of the responsible officer and organisation maintenance officer where applicable.

No health information is stored in the HI Service.

MANAGING BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS

We conduct annual business continuity and disaster recovery planning as part of our program assurance responsibilities. During 2023–24, we reviewed and adapted our plans to prioritise our critical functions.

INTERACTIONS WITH SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS AND CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDERS

Throughout 2023–24, we continued to interact with software developers and contracted service providers.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS

Software developers build practice management software and patient administration systems for healthcare providers. We support them in developing software that's compatible with the HI Service.

In 2023–24, 60 software developers registered to build HI Service compatible software.

There's information for software developers on our website, go to servicesaustralia.gov.au/hiservicedev

CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDERS

Healthcare organisations can engage ICT services to communicate and manage health information.

These ICT services register with us as contracted service providers (CSP). Once registered, a healthcare organisation can link to the CSP in the HI Service. This allows the CSP to access the HI Service on behalf of the healthcare organisation.

In 2023–24, 9 CSPs were registered.

Service level results

The HI Service performance is measured against service levels agreed between Services Australia and the ADHA.

Table 5: Service levels and results 2023–24

Service level description	Target	Result
System availability	≥ 99.5%	99.99%
System responsiveness – response times for external user web services do not exceed a 4 second average	≥ 99.0%	99.98%
Call centre responsiveness – customer average speed of answer in < 7 minutes	≥ 80%	68.8%
Call centre responsiveness – provider average speed of answer in < 2 minutes	≥ 80%	73.3%
Online service request – no staff intervention required, and successful validation requests processed within <5 minutes	≥ 95%	100%
Online service request – staff intervention with request resolved within 5 business days from submission	≥ 95%	92.71%
Paper form processing – processed within 10 business days of completed application	≥ 95%	99.41%
Outbound correspondence – notification dispatched within 10 business days from receipt of a completed application	≥ 95%	99.41%
Complaints – acknowledged within 5 business days of complaint made	≥ 85 out of 100	100%
Complaints – actioned and finalised with 30 calendar days of complaint received	≥ 85 out of 100	100%

Service level description	Target	Result
System incident management – resolved within timeframe applicable to the severity level)	≥ 80%	
• Priority 1 (response: 30 minutes, resolution: < 4 hours)		N/A
• Priority 2 (response: 30 minutes, resolution < 1 business day)		N/A
• Priority 3 (response: 1 business day, resolution < 7 business days)		N/A
• Priority 4 (response: 1 business day, resolution < 20 business days)		N/A
Online IHI registration for eligible non-Medicare individuals through the IHI myGov Member Service.	≥ 80%	96.36%

New performance measures were introduced for the HI Service from 1 July 2023. This included additional consumer and provider performance measures for call centre responsiveness.

Early in the 2023–24 financial year, Services Australia experienced high call demand across all its services. Policy changes also made more people eligible for payments and services and contributed to the high level of demand. In October 2023, the Government boosted our workforce to improve access to services. More than 5,100 permanent frontline customer service delivery staff have been recruited since then. This will continue to improve claim processing times, which will help decrease call wait times for customers and providers.

We will continue to focus on improving service delivery outcomes for 2024–25.

IMPROVED INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THE HI SERVICE

We continued communication activities throughout 2023–24 to support the HI Service.

We contributed to changes to the MS004 Medicare enrolment form, including content updates to remind applicants they may already have an IHI before they submit their application. This change was intended to reduce the number of IHI duplicate records produced through the MS004 form.

We updated content on our customer and health professionals HI Service web pages to clarify the policy process around certifying documents. This change aligned the HI Service policy with the process for certifying documents also utilised by the Department of Home Affairs.

We also provided feedback on HI Service content as part of the major redesign of the health professionals web pages on the Services Australia website. This redesign of existing content improves the user experience and navigation for health professionals using the HI Service.

Operating statement

The operating statement for 2023–24 details the operating costs for the HI Service.

Table 6: HI Service operating statement 2023–24

Expenditure	2023–24 Total \$'000
HI Service Program management	
Workforce	7,152.1
HI Service Delivery	
Workforce	399.7
Information Technology	
Workforce	5,290.7
Computer hardware and software	648.7
Sub-total	5,939.3
Total expenditure	13,491.1



Security, privacy and confidentiality

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (the Privacy Act) regulates the way Services Australia collects, handles and discloses personal information. We comply with the secrecy provisions in the legislation governing the programs we deliver.

We have strict controls and policies in place for the access and disclosure of personal information. We apply appropriate penalties for unauthorised access.

ONLINE SECURITY

The HI Service uses online authentication systems to protect the security and privacy of customer information. This includes information transmitted between the HI Service, healthcare providers and the My Health Record system. The HI Service uses the following authentication systems:

- PRODA — a 2-step online authentication system used by providers to securely access government online services.
- PKI — a set of procedures and technology that provides security and confidentiality for electronic business.

PRIVACY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

We adhere to policies and procedures to protect all personal information. This includes:

- handling all personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act obligations
- all staff completing annual privacy training
- adhering to our Privacy Policy, Privacy Management Plan, and Privacy Incident and Management Plan
- reviewing our Data Breach Response Plan annually
- undertaking Privacy Threshold Assessments for all projects that potentially involve handling personal information
- undertaking Privacy Impact Assessments where required
- investigating all reported privacy incident complaints and suspected data breaches, including notification to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) where required.

The HI Act also imposes restrictions on the collection, use or disclosure of healthcare identifiers and identifying information. It's an offence for a person or organisation to collect, use or disclose certain healthcare identifiers or identifying information unless authorised by the HI Act or other legislation.

A breach of the HI Act relating to a person is a breach of the Privacy Act. People can make a complaint about possible privacy breaches to the OAIC. They can also contact their healthcare provider or ask the OAIC to investigate.

The agency works with the OAIC to investigate any complaint referred to the agency. We take appropriate action to remediate confirmed privacy breaches and resolve complaints where possible. The OAIC has powers to investigate any suspected breach of privacy and can make a determination, including any orders the OAIC considers appropriate.

DEALING WITH BREACHES

The Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme, under Chapter IIIA of the Privacy Act, came into effect on 22 February 2018.

Under the Scheme, regulated entities, including Services Australia, must notify the OAIC and affected individuals of unauthorised privacy breaches. This includes:

- access to personal information
- disclosure or loss of personal information likely to result in serious harm to the person whose personal information was accessed.

The HI Service keeps a full audit of all system interactions for use in investigations if required.

The HI Service had no notifiable data breaches in 2023–24.



Audits and reviews

There were no audits or reviews of the HI Service during 2023–24.

