

# Healthcare Identifiers Service

## Annual Report 2020–21

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Australian Government



Services  
Australia

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# Chief Executive Officer's introduction

As the Chief Executive Officer of Services Australia and Chief Executive Medicare, I'm pleased to share some of the excellent work done on the Healthcare Identifiers Service (HI Service) during what was a very challenging year.

COVID-19 has of course been the big health issue of the past year across the world. As part of the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccine rollout, it has been important that people have a healthcare identifier.

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders, helping people who did not have a healthcare identifier apply for one. Many of these people can now access a digital copy of their immunisation history statement – including their proof of COVID-19 vaccination.

Providing simple and helpful services to our customers is part of our vision to help Australians get on with their lives. To this end, customers can now apply for an Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) online with myGov. They can also access their immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register, also operated by Services Australia, through the HI Service.

We also improved the paper based IHI application process and made it available in languages other than English.

Thank you to all our partners who collaborated with us to improve these services for our customers.

I would especially like to thank our staff who have worked so diligently on the HI Service. Their work has helped make the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic smoother for both our customers and stakeholders.

Services Australia is proud to operate the HI Service on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments. It is my privilege to present the 2020–21 HI Service Annual Report.



**Rebecca Skinner**

Chief Executive Medicare  
Chief Executive Officer  
Services Australia

# Introduction

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Services Australia delivers 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).

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

This annual report captures the details of our activities, finances and operations for the 2020–21 financial year as they relate to the HI Act and regulations.

## ABOUT THE HI SERVICE

The HI Service is a national system for identifying individuals, healthcare providers and healthcare organisations. This service is the foundation of digital health in Australia and a key building block for the My Health Record system. Accurate identification in health systems is a fundamental requirement to transfer patient care information between providers and organisations. The best health systems in the world use a single patient identifier. The HI Service enables that single identifier for Australians. It helps ensure health systems associate information with the right patient and provider at the point of care.

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 who have an active Medicare enrolment are automatically assigned a healthcare identifier. People who are not eligible for Medicare can register with the HI Service for a healthcare identifier online or using 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.

Providers and organisations are assigned a healthcare identifier in the following ways:

- 1** The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) allocates healthcare identifiers to providers on behalf of the HI Service.
- 2** Providers apply directly to the HI Service if they are not registered by one of the national boards supporting Ahpra.
- 3** Organisations apply 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
- work with Ahpra to maintain a single, complete record of provider-assigned 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
- log each time a healthcare identifier is accessed or retrieved
- maintain the Healthcare Provider Directory
- provide information to key stakeholders about the HI Service
- provide reports to the ADHA about the finances and operations of the HI Service
- provide data and analytical information to the ADHA to identify areas for service improvement for our users.

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2020–21, there was a steady growth in active identifiers and increased connections using the HI Service. During the year we:



- assigned 461,265 healthcare identifiers to people



- collected or assigned 45,700 healthcare identifiers for healthcare providers



- assigned 2,513 healthcare identifiers to healthcare organisations



- assigned 2 registration numbers to contracted service providers



- published 384 entries in the Healthcare Provider Directory for consenting healthcare providers



- published 2,259 entries in the Healthcare Provider Directory for healthcare organisations



- responded to 26,082 enquiries from people and healthcare providers. Enquiries included requests for healthcare identifiers and questions about registering with the HI Service.



There were no complaints.

While this is the 11th annual report for the HI Service, it is the first HI Service annual report by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Services Australia as the Chief Executive Medicare.

This follows changes to legislation under the *Services Australia Governance Amendment Act 2020* made on 20 November 2020. These changes took into account our broad service delivery functions and the overall responsibility of the CEO for the operations of the agency. The CEO of Services Australia now holds the statutory roles of Chief Executive Medicare, Chief Executive Centrelink and Child Support Registrar.

# Delivering HI Service improvements

Over 2020–21 we delivered a number of improvements to the HI Service.

People enrolled in Medicare are automatically assigned an individual healthcare identifier (IHI) and can register for a My Health Record with their IHI or Medicare card number. People in Australia who aren't eligible for Medicare need to apply for an IHI before they can register for a My Health Record. During 2020–21, we improved the IHI application form to include information in languages other than English. This is important for the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination rollout, ensuring people who aren't eligible for Medicare can get an IHI and have proof of their COVID-19 vaccination. With an IHI, people who aren't eligible for Medicare can get a digital copy of their immunisation history, including COVID-19 vaccination information, using their My Health Record or with the new IHI service in myGov.

The new digital application process to register for an IHI with myGov was implemented on 5 June 2021. The process supports people to securely provide details from their identity documents online and, if suitable, be provided an IHI and have the IHI service linked to their myGov account. The process takes less than 10 minutes and 32,067 IHIs have been assigned since the service was released.

Using the IHI service in myGov, people can access their immunisation history statement and the COVID-19 digital certificate online.

**Table 1: Number of identifiers assigned to people not Medicare or DVA eligible**

Prior to 2020–21	2020–21
28	32,067

As part of our program of ongoing system enhancements, and in consultation with the ADHA, we implemented a number of other improvements to the HI Service in 2020–21. We also continued to work with and securely exchange data with Ahpra.

Within Services Australia, we supported phase 2 of the Health Delivery Modernisation budget initiative by providing comprehensive advice to our colleagues working on the Identifiers and Data Quality project. This project is looking at how we can improve our services to our customers.



## ASSIGNMENT OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS

The HI Act defines 3 types of healthcare identifiers. These are assigned to:

- healthcare recipients – we call these Individual Healthcare Identifiers (IHI)
- individual healthcare providers – we call these Healthcare Provider Identifier–Individuals (HPI–I)
- healthcare organisations – we call these Healthcare Provider Identifier–Organisations (HPI–O).

Organisations assigned a HPI–O can create a hierarchy of HPI–Os (referred to as 'network HPI–Os') according to the organisation's requirements.

For example, to identify important business areas or functions, or for group healthcare organisations – such as franchises – under the one hierarchy.

**Table 2: Number of identifiers assigned**

Identifiers	2019–20	2020–21	% change since 2019–20	Total 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2021
Assigned IHIs	520,972	461,265	-11.46%	29,785,870
Assigned HPI–Is	46,420	45,700	-1.55%	982,011
Assigned HPI–Os	1,988	2,513	26.41%	21,427

## 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 using the authorised web service channel. Appropriate software and approved authentication technology is required to use the web service channel.

People can also access their own IHI number by contacting us.

Each time the HI Service discloses an IHI it counts as a disclosure under the HI Act. The number of disclosures does not represent the number of people who have an IHI. For example, a healthcare provider may search for the same IHI on multiple occasions, such as each time their patient has an appointment.

**Table 3: Number of Individual Healthcare Identifiers disclosed**

IHI disclosures	2019–20	2020–21	% change since 2019–20
IHIs disclosed by telephone and service centres	166	3,282	1877.11%
IHIs disclosed through web services	283,567,251	345,650,256	21.89%

The number of IHIs disclosed by telephone and service centres increased substantially in 2020–21. This was expected and is driven by the non-eligible Medicare entitlement cohort registering an IHI to access their Immunisation History Statement and digital COVID-19 certificate.

## DISCLOSURE OF HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIERS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND ORGANISATIONS

In 2020–21, we disclosed 762,351 HPI–Is and HPI–Os. In line with the HI Act, we made the disclosures to entities that authenticate healthcare providers and healthcare organisations in digital health transmissions.

**Table 4: Number of HPI–Is and HPI–Os disclosed**

HPI–I and HPI–O disclosures	2019–20	2020–21	% change since 2019–20
HPI–Is and HPI–Os disclosed via web services	557,943	762,351	36.64%

## **PROVISION OF THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER DIRECTORY**

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

During 2020–21, the number of healthcare providers and organisations whose details were published in the directory increased by 2,643, bringing the total number of entries published since 1 July 2010 to 36,438.

## **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**

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

### **HEALTHCARE IDENTIFIER INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

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We maintain systems that contain:

- IHI information (demographic details and addresses)
- HPI–I information (demographic details, addresses and field of practice)
- HPI–O information (organisation names, addresses, services provided and 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**

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As part of our program assurance responsibilities, every year we undertake business continuity and disaster recovery planning for the HI Service. During 2020–21, under the guidance of the Services Australia Coronavirus Taskforce, we reviewed and adapted our plans to prioritise our critical functions. This action ensured we remained vigilant and well placed to maintain our essential services.

## INTERACTIONS WITH SOFTWARE VENDORS AND CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDERS

During 2020–21, in collaboration with the ADHA, we used our enhanced data capability to improve how we work with software vendors and contracted service providers.

### SOFTWARE VENDORS

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In 2020–21, we continued to engage with software vendors to develop their products for the HI Service. Software vendors can find information on connecting with the HI Service at **[servicesaustralia.gov.au/hiservicedev](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/hiservicedev)**

In 2020–21, 37 software vendors registered to develop compatible software for the HI Service.

### CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Healthcare organisations can engage contracted service providers to provide ICT services to communicate and manage health information.

A contracted service provider applies to us for a unique HI Service registration number. Once registered, a healthcare organisation can link the contracted service provider in the HI Service. This allows them to access the HI Service on behalf of the healthcare organisation.

# Service level results

Performance of the HI Service is measured against service levels agreed between Services Australia and the ADHA.

**Table 5: Service levels**

Service level description	Target	Result
Platform availability	≥ 99.5%	99.96%
Platform responsiveness (within Services Australia's environment is < 4 seconds)	≥ 99.0%	99.95%
Call centre responsiveness (average speed of answer)	≤ 2 minutes	46 seconds
Call abandonment rate	< 10%	5.03%
Online service request (successful validation requests processed within < 5 minutes)	≥ 95%	100%
Online service request – staff intervention (request resolved within 5 business days from submission)	≥ 95%	99.90%
Paper form and mail-out fulfilment (processed within 10 business days of completed application)	≥ 95%	99.03%
Complaints (acknowledged within 2 business days)	≥ 98.0%	100%
Complaints (responded to within 15 business days)	100%	100%
System incident management (resolved within timeframe applicable to the severity level)	≥ 80.0%	100%
Security policy compliance (breach of)	= 0	0
Data source integration – eBusiness Gateway (submissions integrated within 2 business days)	≥ 80%	100%

We report monthly to the ADHA on these service levels. During 2020–21, we met or exceeded all service levels.

# Communication activities to support the HI Service

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To support the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program, Services Australia updated information about an IHI and how to apply.

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Our messaging provided context for why people need an IHI. It enables them to get a digital copy of their vaccination details with their immunisation history statement and the new COVID-19 immunisation record.

We collaborated with ADHA to develop key messages used on our website about how people with an IHI can use it to get their My Health Record. We created new guided content to assist people to work out if they need to get an IHI or if they need to reconnect with Medicare. The guided content was viewed 154,733 times between 31 March and 30 June 2021. The guided content about how to get proof of your COVID-19 vaccination is available from **[servicesaustralia.gov.au/covidvaccineproof](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/covidvaccineproof)**

Information about the HI Service is also included in a printed flyer, *Get proof of your COVID-19 vaccination*, which has been distributed to COVID-19 vaccination hubs and providers in support of the vaccination program. The flyer includes a QR Code, which takes a user to further information about the HI Service at **[servicesaustralia.gov.au/ihs](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/ihs)**. The QR code was viewed 34,118 times from 1 March to 30 June 2021.

The printed product is available in 64 community languages from the Services Australia website, as well as the COVID-19 in your language website managed by the Department of Home Affairs, **[covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/health](https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/health)**

## Operating statement

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The operating statement for the 2020–21 financial year, representing the amounts invoiced to the ADHA to fund the operation of the HI Service, is included on the next page.

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**Table 6: HI Service operating statement 2020–21**

	Qtr 1 Jul–Sep \$'000	Qtr 2 Oct–Dec \$'000	Qtr 3 Jan–Mar \$'000	Qtr 4 Apr–Jun \$'000	2020–21 Total \$'000
<b>Income</b>					
Operational Revenue	2,574	2,744	2,186	2,179	9,682
Total Income	2,574	2,744	2,186	2,179	9,682
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b>HI Service Program Management</b>					
Staff Costs	574	545	523	545	2,188
Contractors	108	196	117	117	539
Staff Related Costs	-	-	-	43	43
Travel	-	-	-	-	-
Other Operational Costs	-	9	14	10	33
	<b>683</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>2,802</b>
<b>HI Service Delivery</b>					
Staff Costs	87	351	210	183	831
Contractors	-	-	-	-	-
Staff Related Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-
Other Operational Costs	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>87</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>831</b>
<b>Information Technology</b>					
Staff Costs	165	179	80	105	529
Contractors	790	634	491	402	2,318
Staff Related Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-
Computer Hardware & Software	732	726	683	710	2,850
	<b>1,687</b>	<b>1,539</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>5,698</b>
<b>Overheads</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,574</b>	<b>2,744</b>	<b>2,186</b>	<b>2,179</b>	<b>9,682</b>
Operating Surplus/ (Deficit)	-	-	-	-	-



# Security, privacy and confidentiality

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The *Privacy Act 1988* (the Privacy Act) regulates the way Services Australia collects, handles and discloses personal information.

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We comply with the secrecy provisions in the legislation governing the programs we deliver.

We also have strict controls and policies in place for access and disclosure of personal information for all programs. We apply appropriate penalties, including staff dismissal, for unauthorised access.

## ONLINE SECURITY

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

- Provider Digital Access (PRODA) – a two-step online authentication system used by providers to securely access government online services
- Public Key Infrastructure (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:

- collecting all personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act
- all staff completing privacy training
- maintaining a Privacy Management Plan
- undertaking privacy impact assessments and audits where required
- providing up-to-date privacy advice
- investigating complaints and possible breaches
- complying with specific processes and legislation when disclosing information.

The HI Act also imposes restrictions on the collection, use or disclosure of healthcare identifiers and identifying information. It is an offence for a person or organisation to collect, use or disclose certain healthcare identifiers or identifying information. This is unless it is authorised by the HI Act or another law.

A breach of the HI Act relating to a person is a breach of the Privacy Act, and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) may investigate.

## **DEALING WITH BREACHES**

If a person thinks their healthcare identifier or identifying information has been inappropriately accessed, they can contact us for help. They can also contact their healthcare provider or ask the OAIC to investigate. The HI Service keeps a full audit of all system interactions for use in investigations if required.

There have been no privacy or confidentiality breaches by staff in relation to the HI Service since the service started on 1 July 2010.

On 22 February 2018, the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme under the Privacy Act came into effect. Under the scheme, Services Australia must notify affected people to the OAIC if there is:

- unauthorised access to personal information
- unauthorised disclosure or loss of personal information likely to result in serious harm to the person whose personal information is involved.

Services Australia has had no notifiable data breaches reported for the HI Service since the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme started.

## Audits and reviews

There were no audits or reviews of the HI Service during 2020–21.

