

St Vincent's Private Hospital is committed to ensuring that your personal information is managed in accordance with the Privacy Principles outlined in the Privacy Act 1988 and relevant State Privacy Legislation. In order to provide you with health care services we need to collect, use and disclose your personal information. This policy outlines how we manage your personal information.

Collection

We collect your personal information for the primary purpose of providing health care and directly related services. We only collect information that is relevant and necessary to provide you with these services and to assist with the activities of the Hospital.

Information collected may include your name, address, date of birth, emergency contacts, health fund details, GP contact details, the nature of the problem for which you seek treatment, investigations, medical history, other information relevant to your care and other mandatory data items we are required to collect by law.

Generally this information will be collected directly from you, however, information may also need to be collected from other sources. These sources may include other health professionals, health service providers, health funds, insurance agencies and in certain situations other family members, carers or friends.

Use or Disclosure

We will use or disclose your personal information for purposes directly related to your treatment, and in ways that you would reasonably expect for your ongoing care. This includes sharing your personal information amongst members of your multidisciplinary health care team, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and pastoral care providers. We may also provide relevant information to health professionals involved in your ongoing care after you leave hospital, such as your local GP or referring doctor, whom you have specified on your patient registration form. If you need support services when you go home, we will disclose relevant information to enable these services to provide you with their support and continue your care.

Other hospitals or healthcare providers may contact us to obtain information about you for your ongoing care. We may disclose personal information in these instances to assist with your care after confirmation of their identity and the purpose of the request.

General information about your condition may also be provided to your 'person responsible', a near relative and/or significant other(s), unless you request otherwise. If your life is at risk, we may have to collect, use or disclose your personal information in an emergency without your consent. St Vincent's Lismore discloses your personal information where we outsource any of our services or employ contractors to perform services within our Hospital (e.g. Pathology, Radiology, Pharmacy, etc).

Various legislative and regulatory obligations require us to provide a range of data sets about our patients to State and Commonwealth Government Agencies and Health Funds. Your personal information may also be subpoenaed if it is required as evidence in a court of law.

We may use or disclose patient information for our internal administrative requirements, quality improvement activities, risk management and other purposes required for the operation of the Hospital.

We may also use or disclose your information for the following permitted health situations:

- for research, or the compilation or analysis of statistics, relevant to public health or public safety;
- when necessary to prevent a serious threat to life, health or safety of a genetic relative; or
- to a person responsible for the individual.

We may share your contact details with the Friends of St Vincent's Hospital. The Friends of St Vincent's Hospital provides patients with information, newsletters and details about fundraising appeals. The Friends of St Vincent's may use the information to contact you.

Should we wish to use your personal information for purposes other than ways which you would reasonably expect or those listed above we will obtain your consent.

Government Related Identifiers

In certain circumstances we are required to collect government related identifiers such as Medicare, Pension or Veteran's Affairs numbers. We do not use these identifiers to identify you or your personal information in any way and will only use or disclose this information in accordance with the law or for administrative services involved with your treatment, such as accounting procedures, both internal and by our service contractors (e.g. radiology, pharmacy, pathology, etc.).

Cross-Border Disclosure

If you are an overseas resident or hold insurance with an overseas organisation we may need to disclose information overseas as part of your ongoing care or for our internal administrative requirements.

Anonymity / Pseudonymity

Where it is lawful and practicable to do so, individuals may deal with us anonymously or using a pseudonym, for example, when making a general enquiry about the services we provide. In general, it is impracticable for St Vincent's Lismore to provide healthcare to individuals anonymously or using a pseudonym.

Security

Your personal information is stored in both electronic and paper form. The security of your personal information is important to us and we take all reasonable steps to protect it from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. These steps include password protection for accessing our electronic information technology systems, securing paper files in locked areas/cabinets and physical access restrictions. All staff sign a confidentiality agreement on commencement of employment and are required to sign off annually as part of our mandatory training program. All information held is only accessible by authorised persons for the purpose of carrying out their employment duties. We will destroy or de-identify personal information after our legal obligations to retain the information have expired.

Notification of Data Breach

We take reasonable precautions to prevent your data from being accessed by unauthorised parties and will take appropriate action to remedy an unauthorised access or disclosure should a data breach occur. We will notify you of a data breach if there has been unauthorised access to, unauthorised disclosure of, or loss of, your personal information held by us; and we determine the access, disclosure or loss is reasonably likely to result in serious harm to you or any other individuals to whom the information relates.

In determining whether the data breach is likely to result in “serious harm” we will consider the kind of Information and its sensitivity; whether the information is protected by any security measures and, if so, whether those security measures could be overcome; the person or kinds of persons (**Recipients**) who have obtained, or could obtain, the Information; if a security technology or methodology was used and designed to make the information unintelligible or meaningless to unauthorised Recipients (for example, it was encrypted), the likelihood that the Recipient has or is likely to have: the intention of causing harm to any of the individuals to whom the information relates; and has obtained or could obtain, information of knowledge required to circumvent the security technology or methodology; the nature of the harm; and any other relevant matters.

In the event of a data breach as described above, the notification you will receive from us will include our contact details; a description of the data breach; the kinds of information concerned; and recommendations about the steps you should take in response to the data breach.

Access

You may request access to the information St Vincent’s Lismore holds about you by writing to the Health Information Department at St Vincent’s Lismore. A response will be provided to you within 30 days. We will endeavour to provide you with access in the manner that you have requested if it is reasonable and practical to do so. There may be times when we cannot provide access, and we will provide you with a reason if this is the case. A charge may be associated with your request. An Access Form is available on request.

Quality and Correction

We take all reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information we collect, use and disclose is accurate, complete and up to date. Please inform us if you believe that the personal information we hold about you is incomplete or inaccurate so that we may amend the information. If we do not agree that there are grounds for amendment, you may write to us outlining the information to be amended and we will insert this as an addendum (noting your view) into your record. An Amendment Form is available on request.

Newsletters and other Information

In the future St Vincent’s Private Hospital and/or Friends of St Vincent’s may send you information about our programs, services and activities by postal or electronic mail. These may include information newsletters and details about fundraising appeals. If you do not wish to receive this information, you may notify the Privacy Officer (see contact details listed below). Mail outs to you will cease as soon as possible after notification.

Complaints

St Vincent’s Lismore promotes a customer-focused complaints management process as part of our continuous quality improvement system. All complaints received, are recorded using an electronic monitoring system to enable review of de-identified individual cases and to identify trends and risks. If you have a complaint regarding the handling of your personal information please contact the Nurse Unit Manager or Director of Clinical Services either in person, by telephone 02 (6627 9600) or in writing to PO Box 572, Lismore NSW 2480.

All complaints shall be acknowledged, with a verbal or written response within 24 hours. The investigation of all complaints shall be completed within 14 days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not achievable the complainant shall be advised accordingly. If we do not satisfactorily answer your concerns you may make a complaint to the Federal Privacy Commissioner. Further details can be found at the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner website (www.oaic.gov.au).

Contact Us

If you have any further questions concerning the privacy of your personal information, please contact:

Privacy Officer
Health Information Department
St Vincent’s Lismore
PO Box 572
Lismore NSW 2480
Phone: 02 6627 9600
Fax: 02 6622 3874
Email: privacy@svh.org.au