

Privacy Policy

The Act

The *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000* became effective from 21st December 2001. These laws ensure that individuals consent to the collection of personal and sensitive information about themselves by others - including psychological information. Our *Privacy Policy* describes the type of information we keep, how we may use that information and you may access it.

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Purpose

We collect personal and health related information for the primary purpose of providing comprehensive mental health care to individuals and families in accordance with accepted, high quality general and specialised psychological practice. Some of this information will be used for directly related secondary reasons such as responding to a referral from your doctor, for accounting purposes, for telephone contact regarding appointments or for follow-up purposes. At times we are also legally required to notify authorities of certain community protection matters such as suspected child abuse or firearms risks. The information we collect is generally restricted to demographics (name, address etc.), current and past mental health problems, medical history (including medications), family and social relationships, work and educational background, a record of attendance and correspondence sent and received (e.g. medical or rehabilitation correspondence). In providing the above information (or consent to collect that information) clients are consenting to the subsequent disclosure of that information for both primary and directly related secondary purposes. However, you may exclude specific information from disclosure (e.g. in a report to your medical practitioner) or use (e.g. applying specific telephone contact restrictions). This practice will not disclose personal information for any non-related secondary purpose without your prior written consent.

Records and Security

Our electronic demographic and accounting records are maintained on password-protected computer software and are accessible only to authorised personnel. Our paper records (e.g. case notes) are held in protective archives and lockable filing cabinets primarily at the head office. This office is protected by double deadlocks and a monitored security alarm system. Records will be retained for at least 7 years after the last encounter in the case of adults and for children, until they have attained the age of 25 years. Paper based information that is no longer required is destroyed by shredding.

Access

You may have access to your records upon request. The Act specifies that access to your records can be denied in some situations such as: - where access may pose a serious risk to the life or health of yourself or another person - where access may seriously impact on the privacy of another person - where the information was collected prior to 21st December 2001 - or where refusing access is required by law. For a full discussion of your right to access, refer to National Privacy Principle 6 of the Act. Individuals may have access to only their own records. Only a custodial parent may have access to the records of children, and then only until the children reach an age at which this practice is of the opinion that they can provide their own consent - this age will vary from case to case. You will need to specifically arrange to access your records. The process will depend on the complexity of the information you are seeking. Simple matters may be addressed during the course of a consultation. More detailed needs will require a written request. Arrangements for access will be made within 30 days of the request. A fee may be imposed for information access - a copying fee of 20 cents per page and a fee for time taken in providing the access (in line with the hourly consultation rate as recommended by the Australian Psychological Society). Where access to your information is denied, the reason for this decision will be provided.

Data Quality and Correction

We seek to insure that the information we collect is accurate, current and complete. We encourage you to ensure that we have your most recent information. Should you believe that our information is inaccurate, we will correct our records or note the concerns within your record. For legal reasons we are unable to alter clinical records.

Anonymous Information

Individuals may make anonymous inquiries to the practice about psychological matters. However, when the practice enters into a direct consultant-client relationship with an individual, we will not do so on an anonymous basis for obvious legal reasons.

Information and Complaints

This is a new system and we welcome your feedback and hope that we can meet your privacy expectations. A copy of the Act is available from <http://www.privacy.gov.au/> . If, after discussing any concerns with the principal consultant, you remain dissatisfied with our privacy arrangements you may telephone the Privacy Hotline on 300 363 992.