

Generic consumer access card article for allied health groups Office of Access Card

The access card is a replacement for the Medicare card, Department of Veterans' Affairs cards and other Commonwealth concession cards such as the pensioner concession card.

It does not change anyone's entitlement to receive Australian Government health benefits, veterans' and social services.

The key principles underpinning the access card revolve around improving the delivery of these Australian Government services, preventing fraud and protecting personal information.

The access card will provide a greater degree of certainty that the person is who they say they are when visiting a health professional for a consultation.

In instances where people need to have a dependent child or another person they care for linked to their card, the card holder will be authorised to view and change information on behalf of another person, and in certain circumstances, will also allow people to undertake access card transactions on behalf of another person.

People under 18 years of age will have the same access to health and social benefits and services under the new access card as they do under the current Medicare, Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and Centrelink systems.

Young people who currently need to have a separate Medicare card can have one. For example, a student at a boarding school, or a young person living with a grandparent, may be able to get an access card in their own right.

Veterans and war widows or widowers will also be able to use the access card in the same way they use their DVA cards today.

There will be provisions for veterans who have a gold or white DVA card to have a gold or white access card, and for war widows or widowers to have a gold access card.

Registration for the access card will be conducted over a two year period. In the lead up to registration a comprehensive communication campaign will inform Australian residents about the process, what they need to do, and where they can register.

The campaign will also provide information about the documentation that will be required to register.

The registration process will occur at Centrelink, Medicare and Department of Veterans' Affairs offices, as well as selected Australian Post outlets.

A significant milestone was reached on 21 June, when the Exposure Draft of the access card legislation was released by the Minister for Human Services, Senator Chris Ellison, with the provision for an eight-week consultation period. During this period, Senator Ellison conducted a series of roundtable meetings with stakeholders from consumer and welfare groups, the health service providers' sector (including allied health professionals), and the business and retail sector.

Submissions to the Exposure Draft closed on 21 August 2007.

For further information, or to make a submission on the access card, visit www.accesscard.gov.au or ring the access card information line, 131 792.