

Information Matching Bulletin

News from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner – November 2012

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Inland Revenue plan new match with Customs

To help Inland Revenue make contact with student loan borrowers in serious default of their repayment obligations, a new bill, the Student Loan Scheme Amendment Bill (No2), would allow Customs to disclose to Inland Revenue the contact details that travellers provide on arrival and departure cards.

The Bill had its first reading on 20 September 2012. Clause 45 of the Bill amends section 280H of the Customs and Excise Act 1996.

EEC adds to its line-up of unenrolled voter programmes

In August 2011, to help identify more individuals entitled to vote but not yet enrolled (and to identify enrolled voters who have changed address), the Electoral Enrolment Centre added a new programme to its existing set of matching programmes – the DIA(Passports)/EEC Unenrolled Voters Programme. We will report the results of the new programme in this year's annual report.

The EEC operates four other unenrolled voter programmes using the citizenship register, the driver licence register, the motor vehicle register, and beneficiary and MSD student records to help identify unenrolled voters. These programmes supplement EEC's other approaches to obtaining this information, such as advertising campaigns and change of address information received from NZ Post.

MoH checks eligibility for publicly funded health services

In December 2011, the Ministry of Health started matching data with Immigration New Zealand to identify a person's eligibility for access to publicly funded health and disability support services, or liability to pay for publicly funded health and disability support services received. We will report the results of the new INZ/MoH Publically Funded Health Eligibility Programme in this year's annual report.

MBIE (MED) restart checks on vehicle importers/sellers

After a hiatus of about two years, MED restarted matching data with Customs (in March 2012) and the Ministry of Transport (in May 2012). The Customs programme identifies people who have imported more than three vehicles in a 12 month period and the MoT programme identifies people who have sold more than six vehicles in a 12 month period.

Review of Justice and Immigration programmes tabled

On 26 October, the Privacy Commissioner's report on a periodic review of Justice and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) programmes was tabled in parliament. The programmes under review were:

- BDM(Deaths)/INZ Deceased Temporary Visa Holders
- Citizenship/INZ Entitlement to Reside
- Corrections/INZ Prisoners
- Customs/Justice Fines Defaulters Alerts
- INZ/Justice Fines Defaulters Tracing
- IR/Justice Fines Defaulters Tracing

In the report we recommend that all programmes should continue to operate. Additionally, we recommend that INZ should consider increasing the frequency (currently six monthly) of matching against death and citizenship data to enhance the quality of information it holds. The report is available at <http://privacy.org.nz/information-matching-reports-and-reviews/#periodic>.

Data quality – managing duplicate health records

Colin Trotter

Following a visit to my GP about my troublesome back, I made a call to my local radiographers to book an x-ray. The first thing I was asked was "what is your date of birth?" I thought this was an unusual first step in determining my identity, presuming that my name would be verified first. Anyway, the company had duplicate records for me, one with my old address details and the other with my current address. They said they would merge the records together so I was pleased that there would only be one of me on their file!

In most contexts, maintaining accurate client information is pretty important. It's especially so when decisions made on the basis of inaccurate or incomplete information might result in serious harm. Information held on the National Health Index (NHI) database falls into this category. The risk of duplicate NHI records for a clinician or health provider is that they may only be aware of one patient record and so have an incomplete picture of a patient's medical history.

Given the multitude of health providers that have access to create or update NHI records, it's important that processes are in place to manage duplicate records. An added complication is that temporary NHI numbers are sometimes allocated to patients, and these must be correctly reconciled with the proper number at a later time.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) website describes how it manages situations where more than one NHI number has been generated for a single individual (see <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/health-identity/national-health-index/nhi-information-health-providers/resolution-duplicate-identity>).

- Requests are initially checked against a 'Do Not Link' table, where information is held about pairs of NHIs previously requested as merges but found to be about different people. This table also contains records for twins and other multiple births. Checks are also made against 'National Collections' (special health databases like the Medical Warning System) (see <http://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/national-collections-and-surveys/collections>).
- Each night, all the approved merges are notified to sector providers in files containing the pairs of NHI numbers. Providers are required to update local systems with this information and reconcile submitted merge requests with outcomes.

In 2003, MoH ran a 12 month project to clean up duplicate NHI records. Using specialist software, MoH identified and resolved more than 125,000 duplicate records.

It's of comfort to know that MoH has a process in place to deal with duplicate NHI records. Making sure that data on the NHI is accurate can only mean better health outcomes for you and me.

Information matching workshops

Are you planning on running a new information matching programme, or new to working with a current programme? If so, you'll need to know how to evaluate the privacy implications involved. We call these information matching privacy impact assessments or IMPIAs. To find out more and to get some practical background knowledge on the Privacy Act, enrol in one of our half-day workshops.

The cost is \$180 (includes GST) per person. Agency dedicated workshops are negotiated on a case by case basis.

Our next workshop is tentatively scheduled for 28 February 2013, but is dependent on having enough participants registered. To register your interest in attending this workshop, contact Sharon Newton on (04) 4747590 or by email to sharon.newton@privacy.org.nz.

Publications

To find out more about information matching, check out some of our other resources and publications at <http://privacy.org.nz/data-matching-introduction/>

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