



# media release

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HEALTH SERVICES COMMISSIONER**

## **PRIVACY OF MEDICAL INFORMATION**

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DATE 27 August 2007

The Health Services Commissioner Beth Wilson acknowledges that the media is exempt from health privacy laws in Victoria. In return for this privilege, the media should behave ethically.

In the Commissioner's opinion, purchasing medical records, which may have been stolen, is highly unethical behaviour. She is pleased the police are investigating the matter.

The Commissioner said, "Health information is highly sensitive and that is why the Victorian government enacted specific health privacy legislation to protect health information. Health information can be very intimate and the potential for it to be misused to the detriment of patients is very high. People should be able to seek health services without fear that their private details will be splashed all over the media. People who have a high public profile are in a more difficult position where the potential damage to their reputation will be high."

The Commissioner says she was personally astonished when she heard what Channel 7 had done.

Media Enquiries to the Commissioner on 0417 525 149.