Queensland Health respects the privacy of patients and their families. We understand that clients attending Queensland Health sexual health clinics may be concerned about how their information is collected, stored and who gets to see it.

For the health services we provide you to be effective you must be able to trust us and share with us all the information necessary to enable us to diagnose and treat you.

To protect your privacy Queensland Health follows privacy requirements which set out standards for how we handle personal information.

What information is collected about me?

Queensland Health collects two types of personal information about you.

1. Client registration information—When you first attend a sexual health clinic you will be asked to complete a registration form which includes personal information such as your name, address, contact number, next of kin and date of birth. This information is collected and shared routinely by all Queensland Health services, and is used to help us create and maintain a single Queensland Health record on you. Every time you attend a Queensland Health facility new information is added to your record. Details about your Medicare or other Commonwealth benefit cards are collected for funding purposes only.

2. Clinically sensitive information—In the case of sexual health clinics, this includes your sexual health history, information on sexual preferences, diagnosis and treatment information. Clinically sensitive information will generally be collected directly from you. However, there may be circumstances where information about you will be collected from someone else. For example, from your local doctor or a relative in an emergency. This information may also be included in your record.

How is information about me protected?

Health information may be contained in paper records and may also be held electronically, or in other mediums depending on the tests and treatment you have had. For example, x-ray records or other medical imaging.

All Queensland Health staff are bound by a strict legal duty of confidentiality. It is an offence for our staff to give information about you to anyone except under limited circumstances set out in legislation. We also maintain strict security policies and practices with respect to who has access to personal information about you. If you have any questions about privacy and confidentiality in Queensland Health please check with the relevant Privacy and Confidentiality Contact Officer.

How is my clinically sensitive sexual health information used or disclosed?

Queensland Health understands how important it is that access to any clinically sensitive sexual health information is restricted. Wherever possible this means that it will only be shared among staff working within the sexual health clinic. However, there may be occasions when we need to use or disclose some of your information, such as:

- Where information held on you is relevant to providing you appropriate care and treatment in another Queensland Health facility we will disclose relevant information. If the option to opt-off other Queensland Health record or data
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systems is available to you and you choose to opt-off those systems, we will seek your consent to disclose your clinically sensitive sexual health information for non-emergency treatment at other Queensland Health facilities.

- Where we are legally obliged to disclose information about you—for example, where your records are subpoenaed, if your behaviour is considered a risk to others, or where some other legal right to access requires us to disclose.

- To help manage sexually transmissible infections in the community and to improve overall public health we are obliged by law to notify some positive test results to the Communicable Diseases Unit of the Department of Health. These records are kept securely and only authorised staff have access. If you have elected to opt-off (see below), a positive test result is still notified, but no personal identifying information is provided.

- With your consent, we will share clinically sensitive information with your local doctor or specialist, other service provider we have referred you to, another Queensland Health sexual health clinic that you intend to visit, or a person or organisation that you nominate.

Your records may also be used to:

- undertake quality assurance and other activities that help us monitor and improve the way we operate
- assist in providing professional supervision or mentoring of our staff
- help us with management, funding, monitoring, complaint handling, service planning, evaluation and accreditation activities
- enable us to manage our records.

In all of these situations disclosure is limited to what is necessary to be disclosed.

On occasion, information may be used for research that will help us to improve healthcare practices without your consent. All research involving Queensland Health patients must undergo ethics consideration and be authorised by the chief executive before it can be conducted.

What if I do not want my sexual health record flagged or included on other Queensland Health data systems?

We believe it is in your best interests to ensure that all Queensland Health staff that may be required to treat you in other facilities are aware that your sexual health record exists and, if and where appropriate, seek the information in that record to offer you appropriate care. Staff of the sexual health clinic will only reveal information held in your sexual health record in the circumstances outlined in this brochure.

However, if you do not want to take advantage of the above protection, you may have the option to opt-off the system by signing a patient opt-off declaration form depending on the record-keeping system used at your sexual health clinic. Please discuss the availability of this option with your clinician.

Signing this declaration will mean that the existence of your sexual health record will not be flagged or made available on other record or data systems outside the sexual health clinic, and only staff of the sexual health clinic will have a record that you attend the clinic. If you elect to opt-off the standard system by signing a patient opt-off declaration form, Queensland Health will not be liable for any of the consequences arising out of the information not being available to staff at other Queensland Health facilities.

You can elect to opt-on to the standard system at any time by alerting staff of the sexual health clinic in which you originally completed your declaration form and completing another declaration form.

Can I use an alias?

Queensland Health recognises that some people may wish to use an alias when they present to receive a health service. Using an alias is not recommended because it may prevent us from identifying and accessing all the information we hold about you and providing the appropriate care to you.
What happens when pathology tests are ordered?

When pathology tests are being ordered for you, you have the option to preserve your anonymity by using a code instead of your name. This should be discussed with your clinician if you wish to do this. Using a code means that only staff from the clinic know that the tests that have been ordered and the results are about you.

Please discuss with your clinician how you prefer to be contacted to discuss your test results or to get in touch with you in the future.

Pap smear results for women

Under Queensland law the results of all women who have had pap smears are reported to the Queensland Pap Smear Register (PSR). The PSR is a central and confidential register that provides women with a reminder if their pap smear is overdue or they need follow-up for an abnormal pap smear.

When you have a pap smear, your results and personal details, including your name and address will automatically be sent to the PSR unless you advise the clinic that you wish to opt-off the register. You can also do this by contacting PSR on 1800 777 790.

How do I go about getting access to information held about me?

Queensland Health supports your right to see what health information is held about you. Access to your health records may be able to be provided simply through an administrative process. If the application cannot be processed administratively, it will generally be referred for processing under the Information Privacy Act 2009.

You also have the right to request access to your health record under the Information Privacy Act 2009. If there is information in the health record that is incorrect, or which you do not agree with, you also have the right to request that it be amended.

For information on access to your health information please ask the relevant Privacy and Confidentiality Contact Officer.

Where can I find more information about privacy?

Further information is available on our website at www.health.qld.gov.au (search for ‘health records and privacy’).

What can I do if I believe personal information about me has been managed inappropriately?

Please contact the relevant Privacy and Confidentiality Contact Officer.

Contact list available at www.health.qld.gov.au (search for ‘privacy contact’).
Patient opt-on / opt-off declaration form

I, .................................................................................... of ............................................................................................. hereby elect to  

opt-on  opt-off (please circle) 
from available flagging systems that may operate to alert Queensland Health facilities of the existence of my sexual health record, held at the 

....................................................................................................................................................................................         Clinic 
(name of clinic) 

and give permission for staff of the above named clinic to pass on my client registration information to relevant Queensland Health data systems, as they become available, for the purposes of flagging the existence only of my sexual health record.

I have read and understood the Respecting your privacy in sexual health clinics fact sheet, have been given the opportunity to obtain further information and understand that:

By opting on:
• the existence of my sexual health record will be alerted to other Queensland Health staff who may be involved in my care or treatment at another Queensland Health facility
• staff at other Queensland Health facilities will not have access to the clinically sensitive information held in my record without contacting the staff of the sexual health clinic. Should this occur sexual health clinic staff will ensure that any disclosure of my clinically sensitive information is limited to what is strictly necessary to ensure I receive appropriate care and treatment
• staff of the sexual health clinic may also share relevant information about me in other circumstances, as described in the Respecting your privacy in sexual health clinics fact sheet. For example, where staff are required by law to disclose information.

By opting off:
• I understand the benefits of having my client registration information flagged on broader Queensland Health records and the risks, potential health consequences and potential poorer health outcomes of opting off the flagging system, as staff will be unaware of my sexual health record and will be unable to request information that may be relevant and important to my care and treatment.
• I understand that by signing this declaration form my sexual health record will NOT be flagged on any other Queensland Health data or record system and only staff at the above named clinic will be aware of my record.
• I hereby release and indemnify Queensland Health, its officers, employees and agents from and against all actions, claims, and losses arising from my decision to opt-off the flagging system.
• I understand that even though I have opted off the flagging system, staff of the sexual health clinic may still share relevant information about me as described in the fact sheet—for example, where the disclosure is necessary to provide me with care or treatment in an accident or emergency situation or where staff are required by law to do so.

Dated this ................................................................. day of ................................................................. 20 .....................

Signed .............................................................................................................................................................................

In the presence of

Name .............................................................................. Position ......................................................................

Signed .............................................................................................................................................................................