

Media Release - Ministerial committee endorses electronic messaging standard for New Zealand's health sector

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Wellington 14 December 2004 – The New Zealand Health Information Standards Organisation (HISO) endorsed Health Level 7 (HL7) Standards for Health Information Communications as a National Standard for New Zealand.

For some time now health care professionals and organisations have been using electronic systems to collect, store and exchange patient information, to enable improved delivery of care. The implementation of HL7 messaging standards help reduce or eliminate incompatibilities between systems, thus achieving a speedy and consistent flow of patient information between hospitals, general practitioners and other health professionals.

"We recognised the importance of formally approving the use of HL7 Standards for health communications", said HISO's Chairman Paul Cressey. "This represents an important step forward in improving the delivery of healthcare to all New Zealanders."

Group Manager of the NZ Health Information Service, Mike Rillstone agreed: "HL7 provides a valuable mechanism for specifying and agreeing how and what we communicate and has good buy-in from sector stakeholders. It is great to have this position endorsed."

Health Level Seven is an international health information standards organisation, based in the USA with over 27 affiliate member countries including New Zealand and Australia. The standards developed by its Working Groups focus on the exchange, management and integration of data that support clinical patient care and the management, delivery and evaluation of healthcare services.

The benefits of using HL7 standards include:

- faster, more consistent information to support integrated care
- greater efficiency in healthcare processes
- reduced costs of information interchange between healthcare providers
- improved marketing advantages for health IT vendors developing HL7 compliant health IT systems.

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