



**napwha** national association of  
people with hiv australia



Mental Health  
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## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

***Embargoed until Monday 14 November 2022***

### **Call for social media giants, users to prevent Medibank data spreading**

Peak health and community sector organisations have today issued a joint call urging social media giants and users to prevent stolen sensitive Medibank Private customer data from spreading further online and being weaponised for blackmail.

The joint declaration has been made by the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, the National Association of People with HIV Australia, Mental Health Australia, the Consumers Health Forum of Australia and the Australian Council of Social Service.

Hackers have already released personal health data on the dark web that reveals the names of customers who may have accessed potentially sensitive medical procedures.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has called on media outlets to refrain from accessing and publishing the information.

But there is also an onus on social media users to not post or share the information.

Social media giants like Meta and Twitter must also prevent users from circulating the information, and pull down any posts that contain it.

#### **AFAO CEO, Darryl O'Donnell, said:**

“We know traditional media outlets will be responsible by not participating in disseminating this confidential data, and incentivising this criminal behaviour. But we need social media platforms to do the same.

“We call on Twitter and Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, to assure Australians they will pull down any posts that share data from the Medibank breach.



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“We also ask all Australians to band together by not seeking out or sharing hacked information. This is something all of us can do to send a signal to the hackers that we won’t be blackmailed.”

**NAPWHA President, Scott Harlum, said:**

“People living with HIV have dealt with enough stigma. This is a terrible situation for people with HIV who are fearful of being extorted.

“The weaponisation of HIV status for financial gain is beneath contempt.

“We shouldn’t be in this situation. We ask everyone to play their part in stopping the breach from going further.”

**ACOSS CEO, Dr Cassandra Goldie, said:**

“People with particular health and related vulnerabilities are at great risk of being adversely affected by the release of health data into the public arena.

“People with few resources also face insurmountable barriers to taking action to protect themselves. It is vital that those with the powers to shut down the exploitation of people’s private data act urgently to protect people who are at risk.”

**Mental Health Australia CEO, Dr Leanne Beagley, said:**

“The latest development in the Medibank cyber breach is no doubt causing immense distress and concern for those affected.

“The status of a person’s health is theirs alone to know, understand, manage and, if they choose, to share. It is not for anyone else to comment on, publicise or use to inflict shame.”

**Consumers Health Forum of Australia CEO, Dr Elizabeth Deveny, said:**

“CHF believes no one’s personal or medical information should be accessed or shared by anyone without that person’s explicit consent.”

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