HarrisCounselling
Family & Relationship Services

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Privacy policy

Overview

Harris Counselling is committed to complying with the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles 2014 and the privacy provisions of all applicable legislation.

This privacy policy covers all personal information we hold, that is, information, or an opinion about an individual, whose identity is apparent, or can be reasonably ascertained, from that information or opinion. This includes information we have collected from people through our office, over the phone and over the internet.

Collecting information

When we collect personal information from an individual, we will ensure that we do so in a fair manner and that we let the individual know where and how to contact our organisation. We will only collect information that is necessary for one or more of our functions or activities.

We will advise individuals or the purpose for which their personal information is collected.

If we collect sensitive information (as defined under the Act), we will treat it with the utmost security and confidentiality. We will ensure that it is not collected for any purposes, other than those for which we have obtained the individual's consent, unless the law requires otherwise, or other exceptional circumstances prevail as described under the Act.

Where an individual chooses not to provide requested information, we will advise that individual of what consequences this non-disclosure may have. For example, withholding certain information may limit our ability to provide relevant offers or services to individuals.

Disclosing information

We will only disclose personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act.

This means that personal information may be disclosed:

- For the purposes for which we have advised that we are collecting it, and for related purposes that the individual would reasonably expect,
- Where we have the consent of the individual to do so,
- As required by law, or
- Under other circumstances where permitted under the Act.

In the course of our business activities, we may need to disclose some of your personal information to relevant staff.

Unauthorised disclosure or access

As the Harris Counselling is committed to protecting the privacy of individuals, we will view unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal information by our employees or contractors, as a serious breach of this policy. Appropriate action (which may include disciplinary or legal action) will be taken in such cases.

Opt- out

We will always provide individuals with a nil-cost way of contacting us to register a request to "opt -out" from receiving any product offers.

Access to personal information

Individuals will be able to access their personal information upon request. However, Harris Counselling may occasionally need to deny access to information in accordance with the exemptions contained in the Act.

Security

Our goal is to protect the personal information collected by the (insert practice name here) and its associations. Personal information will be managed confidentially and securely and destroyed appropriately when no longer required.

We will monitor and implement appropriate technical advances or management processes, to safeguard personal information.

Data Quality

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the data we collect, use or disclose is accurate, complete and up to date, and has been obtained directly from individuals or other reputable sources.

Privacy Inquiries

Privacy related inquiries or concerns can be directed to Harris Counselling, contactable as above

Availability and review of Policy

We will make our privacy policy available upon request. It is also available in our waiting area.

This policy will be reviewed from time to time and any amendments will be incorporated into the updated policy.

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Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) — *No. 119, 1988, Compilation No. 103, compiled as of 10 June 2025*

At Harris Counselling, your privacy is fundamental to the safety, trust and therapeutic integrity of our work together. This policy explains how we collect, use, store and protect your personal information in accordance with the **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)** and the **Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)**. Our approach is grounded in trauma-informed, ethical and transparent practice.

The following principles relate directly to how we manage your privacy as per this legislation:

1. Open and Transparent Management of Personal Information (APP 1)
We manage personal information in an open, transparent and accountable way. This includes:

- Maintaining an up-to-date privacy policy that clearly explains what information we collect, how it is used, and how it is protected.
- Ensuring you know how to make a complaint or raise concerns about privacy.
- Providing this policy publicly on our website and in our practice.

2. Anonymity and Pseudonymity (APP 2)
Where possible, you may choose not to identify yourself or to use a pseudonym when interacting with us. However, full identification is required when:

- It is necessary for safe and effective clinical care.
- We are legally required to collect identifying information (e.g., for Medicare, mandatory reporting, or risk-related obligations).

Collection of Personal Information

3. Collection of Solicited Personal Information (APP 3)
We only collect personal information that is reasonably necessary for providing counselling and related services. This may include:

- Contact details
- Relevant personal and family history
- Sensitive information such as mental health, relationship, or wellbeing information

Sensitive information is collected **only with your consent**, unless an exemption applies (e.g., serious risk of harm).

How We Store and Protect Your Information

To ensure your personal and sensitive information is kept safe, Harris Counselling uses a combination of secure digital systems and protected physical records. We take reasonable steps to protect all information from misuse, interference, loss, and unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure, in accordance with APP

Digital Systems
Splose (Practice Management System) We use Splose to manage client intake, consent forms, appointment scheduling, communication, and clinical administration.

- Information is stored on secure Australian servers.
- Access is restricted to authorised Harris Counselling practitioners.
- Splose uses industry-standard encryption and security protocols.
- Only information necessary for your care is stored in this system.

MYOB (Billing and Financial Records) MYOB is used exclusively for invoicing, payments, and financial compliance.

- Only minimal personal information (e.g., name, contact details, invoice history) is stored.
- No clinical notes or sensitive health information are kept in MYOB.
- Data is protected through MYOB's secure, encrypted systems.

Paper-Based Records
Handwritten Case Notes and Physical Files Harris Counselling maintains handwritten clinical notes and paper-based client files as part of our therapeutic and legal record-keeping obligations.

- Each client has an individual physical file.
- Files are stored in a locked filing cabinet within a secure, access-restricted area of the practice.
- Only authorised practitioners can access these records.
- When records are no longer required, they are securely destroyed in accordance with legal and ethical requirements.

Cross-Border Disclosure of Personal Information (APP 8)

Harris Counselling Melbourne may use trusted third-party service providers that store or process information in locations outside Australia, including the United States. This may include administrative platforms such as Dropbox, which provide secure cloud-based storage and document management services. When personal information is disclosed to an overseas provider, we take reasonable steps to ensure that the recipient handles your information in a manner consistent with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), including through contractual arrangements, security assessments, and limiting the type and amount of information stored offshore.

By engaging with our services, you acknowledge that your personal information may be transferred to, stored by, or accessible to organisations located outside Australia. You also understand that overseas recipients may not be subject to the same privacy laws as Australia, and that we cannot guarantee that an overseas provider will comply with the APPs. Where required, we will seek your explicit consent before storing or transferring sensitive information overseas. You may contact us at any time to ask how your information is stored or to request further details about our cross-border disclosure practices.

4. Dealing with Unsolicited Personal Information (APP 4)
If we receive personal information we did not request, we will:

- Assess whether it is information we are permitted to collect under APP 3
- If not required, we will securely destroy or de-identify it as soon as practicable

5. Notification of Collection (APP 5)
When we collect your information, we will take reasonable steps to ensure you are aware of:

- Who is collecting the information (Harris Counselling)
- The purpose of the collection
- How the information will be used and stored
- Your rights to access and correct your information
- Any legal obligations that may require disclosure
- How to contact us with questions or concerns

This information is provided during intake, on our website, and in this policy.

Use and Disclosure of Personal Information

6. Use or Disclosure (APP 6)
We use or disclose personal information only for:

- The **primary purpose** of providing counselling and related services
- A **secondary purpose** that you would reasonably expect and that is directly related to your care
- Situations where you have provided consent
- Situations where disclosure is required or authorised by law (e.g., risk of harm, court orders, mandatory reporting)

We do not share your information with third parties unless one of these conditions applies.

7. Direct Marketing (APP 7)
We do not use your personal information for direct marketing without your consent. If you choose to receive updates or resources from us, you may opt out at any time through a simple, accessible mechanism.

Integrity and Security of Personal Information

8. Cross-Border Disclosure (APP 8)
If we need to disclose personal information to an overseas service provider (for example, a secure digital platform), we will:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure the recipient complies with the APPs
- Remain accountable for how your information is handled

We use reputable, secure systems that meet Australian privacy standards.

9. Government-Related Identifiers (APP 9)
We do not adopt, use or disclose government-related identifiers (such as Medicare numbers or tax file numbers) except where:

- Required by law
- Necessary to verify your identity
- Needed for processing Medicare claims or rebates

Access, Quality and Correction of Personal Information

10. Quality of Personal Information (APP 10)
We take reasonable steps to ensure the information we hold is:

- Accurate
- Up-to-date
- Complete
- Relevant to your care

We may check details with you periodically to maintain accuracy.

11. Security of Personal Information (APP 11)
We take active measures to protect your information from:

- Misuse
- Interference
- Loss
- Unauthorised access, modification or disclosure

This includes secure digital systems, password protection, restricted access, and secure disposal processes. When information is no longer required, we destroy or de-identify it in accordance with legal and ethical requirements.

12. Access to Personal Information (APP 12)
You have the right to request access to the personal information we hold about you. We will:

- Respond within 30 days
- Provide access unless a legal or clinical exception applies
- Charge only a reasonable cost-recovery fee if applicable

13. Correction of Personal Information (APP 13)
You may request correction of any personal information that is:

- Inaccurate
- Out-of-date
- Incomplete
- Irrelevant
- Misleading

If we cannot make the correction, we will:

- Provide written reasons
- Note your correction request alongside the information

Questions or Concerns
If you have questions about this policy, wish to access or correct your information, or would like to make a privacy complaint, you can contact:
Harris Counselling Melbourne
We take all concerns seriously and will respond promptly and respectfully.