

## Pharmacy cyber security checks vital in preparing for electronic prescriptions

**Fred IT Group has urged pharmacies to actively protect against cyber security risk as the sector prepares for the introduction of electronic prescriptions in Australia this year.**

According to Paul Naismith, pharmacist and CEO of Fred, "We have been looking forward to Australia's move to electronic prescriptions for more than a decade. Electronic prescriptions further strengthen medication safety checks for pharmacies and their patients, but will also provide added flexibility for patients and reduce paper handling for pharmacy."

"Electronic prescriptions will also mean that pharmacies are working with larger amounts of digital data, and that data will be increasingly important to their business continuity. To prepare for this move, we urge pharmacies to pay attention to their cyber security protection."

Pharmacy has become increasingly aware of the risks of cybercrime as a result of the introduction of the Notifiable Data Breach Scheme and mandatory reporting of cyber attacks in 2018. In the two years since the scheme was introduced:

- Australia has recorded one reported cybercrime every 10 minutes
- The average cost of a data breach for a business has been \$276,323
- The health sector has become one of the main sectors affected by cyber attacks (along with the finance sector). In 2019, health service providers reported 105 of the total 289 data breaches (36%) in the first half of the year\*\*

Andrew McManus, who manages Fred's cyber protection service, called Fred Protect, says it is important that pharmacy businesses actively consider their cyber protection at times such as this when their business is experiencing change.

According to McManus, "We know that cyber criminals use periods of change, such as the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, to actively seek out new vulnerabilities. As Australia moves to electronic prescriptions, pharmacies will be dealing with a significant transition to workflow and business continuity. On top of that, they will be managing increased amounts of digital data. Taken together, these two factors highlight the need for pharmacies to pay attention to cyber security considerations as they prepare for electronic prescriptions".

Fred Protect is a real time cyber protection service that has been developed to help all Australian pharmacies protect against the risk of cyber crime. It includes software and hardware protection, risk assessment, training, and incident response guides.

According to Paul Naismith, "The surge in reported cyber attacks of the last two years is only the tip of the iceberg, as many attempts go unreported. It is important that pharmacies factor cyber security into their planning so that they can focus on business as usual, whilst remaining confident that their pharmacy is protected against the potentially disastrous implications of data loss that can result from a cyber attack."

"Cyber security has become an important area of compliance for pharmacy. Our industry faces the same responsibilities to notify of data breaches that other businesses face. Quality Care 2020 also requires that pharmacies are taking action in cyber security. These changes highlight the importance that pharmacies stay across this increasing area of risk. We urge pharmacies to run security audits and to actively think about their processes for protecting against cybercrime."

In the past, good quality Anti Virus and backups addressed the majority of threats. However, Fred Protect was launched in March to provide pharmacies with cyber protection suited to the current environment of cyber risks that small and medium businesses face. It complements existing Anti Virus and backups, and can be used by all pharmacies, regardless of dispense or POS software. Fred Protect includes:

- Cyber security risk assessment and ongoing training
- Easy to use and concise cyber security documentation
- Intrusion prevention and detection for all devices in your store
- Real time 24/7 year-round network monitoring by a security operations centre (SOC) team
- Monthly reporting.

The Fred website has a range of free resources to help pharmacies run cyber security checks and understand cyber risk. You can also contact Fred for more specific advice.

[www.fred.com.au/fred-protect](http://www.fred.com.au/fred-protect)

**Media queries:** Andrew McManus, General Manager Managed Services, **Fred IT Group, M** 0410 691 027

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### About Fred IT Group

Fred IT Group is Australia's largest provider of IT solutions to pharmacy. Fred's leadership and commitment to medication management during its 27 years has seen it deliver a number of innovations for health professionals and government including Fred NXT, Australia's first cloud based management platform developed specifically for pharmacy, eRx Script Exchange, Australia's first and largest national electronic prescriptions exchange, the MedView, cloud based platform with a range of tools to help healthcare professionals make medicine use safer for their patients, and the national delivery of electronic prescriptions.