

POLAR DSA Rollout – June 2026

FAQs

DATA SHARING AGREEMENT (DSA) – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Data Sharing Agreement

What is the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)?

The Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) is a formal agreement between your General Practice and SEMPHN that sets out how deidentified data from the POLAR platform is shared, used, stored, and protected. It defines each party's responsibilities and ensures compliance with privacy laws, data governance requirements, and security standards.

What is changing in the DSA?

The updated DSA includes:

- clearer wording regarding data governance and responsibilities;
- updated Schedule A relating to POLAR;
- clarification of data linkage and research processes;
- updated security and privacy wording; and
- administrative improvements to support consistency across participating practices.

Why do we need to sign the DSA?

Signing the DSA ensures:

- Data sharing can legally occur between your practice and SEMPHN
- Both parties agree on how data will be handled and protected
- Compliance with privacy legislation and regulatory obligations
- Clear understanding of responsibilities, risks, and governance

Without a signed DSA, SEMPHN cannot receive or use your practice data.

What happens if practices do not sign the DSA?

If the DSA is not signed:

- Data sharing cannot occur
- SEMPHN cannot receive or use your data

- Participation in programs such as **PIP QI** may be impacted

How long is the DSA valid?

The DSA starts when both parties sign and continues until terminated by either party.

Can practices terminate the agreement?

Yes. Either party can terminate the agreement by providing **10 business days' written notice**, or immediately in cases of serious breach.

Is patient consent required?

The DSA relates to de-identified data so explicit consent is not required under the Privacy Act. Practices remain responsible for complying with applicable privacy obligations and RACGP standards, including appropriate patient information and disclosure processes.

POLAR

What is POLAR?

POLAR is a secure data extraction and analytics platform provided by Outcome Health. It:

- Extracts data from your clinical system
- De-identifies it within the practice environment
- Securely transmits it to SEMPHN's data storage systems

It supports quality improvement, reporting, population health planning, and analytics.

Will this affect our current POLAR setup?

No. There are **no changes to your current POLAR setup**.

Data

What types of data are shared?

Only **de-identified data** is shared. This means:

- Personal identifiers (e.g. name, address, contact details) are removed
- Data is processed so individuals cannot reasonably be identified
- Identifiable patient data **remains within the practice** and is not accessible to SEMPHN through POLAR.

Does this update change the type of data SEMPHN receives?

No. SEMPHN continues to receive de-identified data only, unless otherwise authorised under separate arrangements. Identifiable patient information remains within the practice environment and is not accessible to SEMPHN through the POLAR platform.

How is data extracted and protected?

Data is extracted automatically from your Clinical Information System.

- Identifiable information is removed at the point of extraction
- De-identified data is encrypted and securely transmitted
- Industry-standard encryption and security controls are applied

Where is the data stored?

Data is stored within secure Australian-based infrastructure with security controls aligned to industry standards.

What is the data used for?

De-identified data may be used for:

- Quality improvement activities
- Population health planning
- Program evaluation and reporting
- Commissioned program delivery (e.g. PIP QI)
- Approved research and data linkage projects

It is used to support improved patient outcomes and health system planning.

Can SEMPHN identify individual patients?

No. All data shared with SEMPHN is de-identified and protected using encryption and strict governance controls. SEMPHN cannot identify individual patients.

Will the data be shared for marketing purposes?

No. The agreement explicitly states that data will not be made available to commercial entities (e.g. pharmaceutical companies) for marketing purposes.

Who can we contact for more information?

For any questions about the DSA, POLAR, or the signing process, please contact the SEMPHN POLAR Support Team on the email address: polar@semphn.org.au