



BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2020

OPENING STATEMENT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AGENCY

Thank you Chair.

2020 has been a challenging year where we have seen more Australians than ever turning to government for information, services and support. Digital has been a critical enabler for the government's COVID-19 response.

In the DTA, we quickly re-prioritised our work program to allow us to rapidly deliver australia.gov.au, the Coronavirus Information App and the Australian government's Official WhatsApp channel. Millions of Australians have turned to these platforms for trusted government information and support.

The DTA also delivered COVIDSafe in record time to help protect the health of citizens and the economic wellbeing of the nation. Australia was one of the first countries in the world to implement a digital contact tracing solution. COVIDSafe was launched on 26 April as a sovereign capability to meet the needs of our public health officials and government more broadly.

As with any modern mobile App, we have taken an iterative approach to the development of COVIDSafe. 13 updates have been released since launch, with many more to come. We have worked with global specialists in both the public and private sectors to continuously improve the system from end-to-end. It is underpinned by purpose-built legislation and strong privacy and security controls, with cybersecurity experts from the University of Adelaide finding that COVIDSafe is one of the best and safest Apps of its kind in the world.

More than 7.1 million Australians have now registered. This represents one of the broadest and fastest uptakes globally. Health Officials are using COVIDSafe to complement manual contact tracing; to provide assurance over known contacts and to identify new contacts that would not have otherwise been found. Importantly, unlike decentralised approaches, COVIDSafe allows health officials to be the central point of contact tracing with visibility of hot spots and clusters.

At the same time as supporting the government's response to the pandemic, we have continued to progress our broader work program to ensure that government digital services are simple, clear and fast.

Digital identity is already allowing 1.7 million Australians to enjoy the benefits of fast, secure access to over 70 government services. The recent budget announcement will allow us to further expand digital identity to provide more people and businesses with access to more services online.

Our sourcing reforms have increased the number of opportunities for small to medium-sized enterprises and made it easier for Australian businesses to bid for and win work with government. The Digital Marketplace has provided almost 5,000 opportunities, with 70% of these being awarded to SMEs.

We are also supporting the government's capability agenda through the digital profession. As the demand for digital services increases, so does the demand for digital skills. The digital, HR and data professions are working to lift the capability of the APS. Together, we will help to bridge the gap between supply and demand for these critical skillsets.

Finally, we are working across the APS to drive better coordination and simplification of the government's digital estate. This will increasingly move us from a set of siloed capabilities to a landscape of connected platforms and services.

While challenging, 2020 has allowed us to demonstrate the value of collaboration and the importance of digital in supporting the government's strategic agenda.

Senators, I thank you for the opportunity to provide an opening statement and we look forward to taking your questions.