

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Health**

**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19**

**Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**31 August 2020**

**PDR Number:** IQ20-000145

**Question Subject:** State and Territory agreements

**Type of Questions:** Written

**Questioner:** Katy Gallagher

**Question:** As at the date of the Department's response to this question, which states/territories have signed agreements to access COVIDSafe data? In each jurisdiction that has signed an agreement:

- (a) Has COVIDSafe data been accessed, and if so in how many cases (of COVID-19)?
- (b) Have any COVIDSafe users been diagnosed with COVID-19 but refused to upload their COVIDSafe data, and if so in how many cases?

If necessary, please liaise with states and territories to answer this question.

**Answer:**

**Introductory Question:** All state/territory public health authorities have agreed to the arrangements for access, use and disclosure of COVIDSafe app data. As a result, the National COVIDSafe Data Store is now able to be accessed by authorised public health officials in all jurisdictions.

All jurisdictions signed the first bilateral agreements over the period from 8 to 12 May 2020 to enable access to COVID app data.

These bilateral agreements have been updated to align with the *Privacy Act 1988* as amended by the *Privacy Amendment (Public Health Contact Information) Act 2020*. As at 31 August 2020, Victoria, New South Wales (NSW), Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia have signed the updated agreements, with other jurisdictions indicating they are in the process of signing.

**(a) and (b):**

Under the *Privacy Act 1988*, the Commonwealth is not able to access COVID app data for reporting requirements, with the exception that the data store administrator (Digital Transformation Agency) may produce de-identified statistical information about the total number of registrations through COVIDSafe.

To date, jurisdictions have not routinely recorded/reported on whether individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 have the COVIDSafe app installed, and whether any COVIDSafe users who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 have refused to upload their COVID app data. For this reason, available information is incomplete.

With respect to access to COVID app data, information provided by jurisdictions indicates that:

- NSW has made greatest use of the app. In one instance their access to COVID app data revealed a previously unrecognised exposure date from a known venue, Mounties.  
This resulted in the identification of an additional 544 contacts. Two people in this group presented for testing and were subsequently confirmed to have COVID-19.
- NSW reported that app data has been successfully used by health officials to identify 53 close contacts, including 14 contacts that were not otherwise identified by manual contact tracing.
- Victoria has reported that 1703 cases said that they have the app, but that no additional contacts have been identified.
- Victoria has now fully integrated COVIDSafe usage into its contact tracing processes. Due to strict lock down in Melbourne, there are limited close contacts of positive cases to be identified, but app data is being used to validate close contacts identified through manual contact tracing processes.
- Queensland has reported that the app has verified a close contact who was also identified through manual tracing.
- No other jurisdiction has identified close contacts using the app due to small positive case numbers. All jurisdictions are ready to use the app in the event of further outbreaks.

The Department is currently consulting with jurisdictions on a framework to inform reporting on the operation and effectiveness of COVIDSafe and the National COVIDSafe Data Store. This will rely on the cooperation of jurisdictions to supply this data from their contact tracing records (rather than directly from the app).