

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

6 May 2020

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Question Subject: Singapore experience

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Questioner: Senator Patrick

Question:

Senator PATRICK: Ms Edwards, when you say the app works, in some sense you're relying on the Singapore experience. There's a face there that Hansard won't pick up! Have you received any reports from the Singapore government or an entity in Singapore that go to how the application actually delivered a result in respect of a positive medical outcome?

Ms Edwards: The reason I make a face is that I think my only reference to Singapore was to note that I think that figure of 20 per cent had been mentioned in relation to—

Senator PATRICK: Sure. My question stands: have you received data?

Ms Edwards: Absolutely. The answer to the question is probably: yes, we have been engaged with Singapore and have gathered various information. But I don't have the information about that today and haven't brought the right officers. It's obviously an important question. Could I take it on notice and come back to you?

Senator PATRICK: Yes, please.

Ms Edwards: We're having all sorts of discussions with nations around the world about various elements of their COVID responses, and that's one of them, but I don't have the detail.

Senator PATRICK: I'm particularly interested in actual performance in terms of how the Singaporeans have felt it has achieved this many additional contacts that would not have been received otherwise—so outcomes.

Ms Edwards: I'm very happy to provide what we have. I do have to say that we obviously, as I understand, have made use of some of the code that was sourced from Singapore, but this is an Australian app designed for our purpose.

Senator PATRICK: This in some sense goes to the reasoning behind going down this path. I know you've spent more than a million dollars on it.

Ms Edwards: Absolutely. My point is that the Singaporean purpose for using it and the way they use it will differ from our very narrow purpose to help contact tracing, but I'm happy to take on notice what we know of Singapore's experience.

Senator PATRICK: And table that, please.

Ms Edwards: Absolutely.

Senator PATRICK: I'm not interested in the high-level stuff in the technical performance of it—

Ms Edwards: To the extent we know it.

Answer:

The Department of Health has not had any direct contact with Singapore and has not received data on uptake.

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) has and continues to engage with GovTech in Singapore, but has not received any information on the performance of the TraceTogether App.

As at 31 August 2020, the Singapore TraceTogether website indicates that there are 2.3 million users. Assuming a population of 5.7 million (which is the latest published figure as at June 2019), the App has a 40% adoption rate.