



**THE SENATE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON COVID-19**

**Media release
COVIDSafe application**

On 8 April 2020 the Senate established the Select Committee on COVID-19 to inquire into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the committee has held six public hearings via videoconference to examine the government's health and economic response to the pandemic.

At the committee's first public hearing on 23 April, committee Chair, Senator Katy Gallagher, highlighted the importance of the inquiry:

This committee is a key vehicle to provide accountability, transparency and scrutiny of the Australian government's response to the pandemic for the Australian people. Over the next 18 months we will work tirelessly to shine a light on every aspect of the national response.

On 26 April COVIDSafe was released as a tool for state and territory health authorities to undertake contact tracing for people exposed to COVID-19. As of 6 May, more than 5 million people had downloaded COVIDSafe. As the government encourages all Australian adults to download the app, it is important that they have confidence that their privacy is protected.

In light of the considerable public interest in the app and how contact tracing information will be used and stored, the committee held a public hearing on 6 May. During the hearing, the committee questioned the Attorney-General's Department, Department of Health and Digital Transformation Agency about COVIDSafe and the safeguards in place to ensure the privacy of individuals. The committee also inquired into the privacy protections built into COVIDSafe and exposure draft legislation that is expected to be introduced in Parliament in the next sitting period.

During the course of the inquiry, the committee will scrutinise the government's response to the pandemic and examine issues and concerns as they arise. In fulfilling this role, the committee intends to oversight COVIDSafe by reviewing its rollout and pursuing privacy and other concerns related to the app. At the completion of its inquiry in June 2022, the committee will produce a final report to the Senate.

The Hansard transcript of the 6 May hearing and other hearings together with information about the inquiry and the committee membership is available on the committee webpage: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/COVID-19/COVID19

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