

Digital Transformation Agency (DTA)
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 Public Hearing Opening Statement
6 May 2020

Thank you for the invitation to address the committee in relation to the Digital Transformation Agency's involvement in responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

Since early March, the DTA has been working on a number of fronts to support the Government's public communication and public health measures.

Firstly, we have led the development of a suite of new digital channels and services that have made it easier for the Australian community to access information on COVID-19.

We are responsible for the australia.gov.au website which consolidates in one place all the essential information and advice from across the Australian Government, as well as the states and territories. This includes up to date health information as well as advice on the financial and social supports available to people.

As of this morning, there have been 9.7 million unique visitors since go-live, making up 16.9 million total visits.

We also worked with the Department of Health on the development of the Coronavirus Australia App and WhatsApp channel to enable the flow of information to the community.

The Coronavirus Australia App has been downloaded 3.54 million times and over 14.5 million messages have been sent and received through the WhatsApp channel.

Secondly, we have worked very closely with the Department of Health and the Attorney-General's Department on the rapid development of the COVIDSafe App to support contact tracing.

The COVIDSafe App uses digital technology to make it faster and easier for state and territory health officials to contact people who have been exposed to someone who has had a positive diagnosis of COVID-19. Its purpose is to help control the spread of infection in the community.

We have worked with our colleagues in Health and the Attorney Generals' department to adopt a privacy by design approach to ensure robust technical, data governance and legal protections are in place.

As of this morning, 5,086,284 Australians have registered for the COVIDSafe App. The App is being constantly improved and the community will receive updates on a regular basis.

Thirdly, the DTA has also been supporting APS agencies with the rapid and widespread shift to remote working. During March and April in excess of 500 requests were processed through our Digital Sourcing Panels to equip agencies with the relevant technology capabilities for the disruptive period ahead.

For a small agency of around 250 people, we have been giving our all to make sure that the Australian community, and the Australian Public Service, are able to access digital services, tools and advice that helps them during this challenging period.