

MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL AND DATA COUNCIL

TELECONFERENCE – 1 MAY 2020

COMMUNIQUÉ

Today, the Australian Data and Digital Council Ministers met (by teleconference) to discuss data and digital matters and shared challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following Ministers attended the meeting:

- The Hon Stuart Robert MP (Commonwealth)
- The Hon Victor Dominello MP (New South Wales)
- Parliamentary Secretary, Danny Pearson MP (Victoria)
- The Hon Dave Kelly MLA (Western Australia)
- The Hon David Pisoni MP (South Australia)
- The Hon Michael Ferguson MP (Tasmania)
- Mr Mick Gentleman MLA (Australian Capital Territory)
- The Hon Lauren Moss MLA (Northern Territory)
- The Hon Kris Fafoi (New Zealand)

Ministers welcomed New Zealand to the membership of the Australian Data and Digital Council.

COVID-19 continues to be the largest disruptive event the world has seen in many years and it is having a significant health and economic impact. Government services are continuing to evolve rapidly to meet the need for people and businesses to interact online, deliver real-time information and services, when and where needed.

COVIDSafe app

Ministers discussed the recently released COVIDSafe app which is designed to help state and territory health officials to contact people quickly who may have been exposed to COVID-19. The health initiative uses technology to automate and improve what state and territory health officials already do manually. COVIDSafe will speed up the process of identifying people who have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with coronavirus, stopping further spread of the virus in the community quickly. The app is part of the three key requirements for easing restrictions: Test, Trace and Respond.

Ministers acknowledged privacy concerns are still front and centre for many people when deciding whether to download the app and were an important consideration in the app's design. All information collected by the app is securely encrypted and stored in the app on the user's phone. No one, not even the user, can access it. Unless and until a person is diagnosed with COVID-19, no contact information collected in the app is disclosed or able to be accessed. Then, once the person agrees and uploads the data, only the relevant state or territory public health officials will have access to information. The only information they are allowed to access is that of close contacts in their jurisdiction. Once the coronavirus

pandemic is over, and Australia no longer needs the app, the app and the information on it will be deleted permanently.

Use of the App is voluntary. Ministers were keen to see a strong uptake of the app, noting it had already been installed by 3.5 million people.

New Zealand and the Commonwealth committed to sharing experiences and lessons learnt with regard to digital contact tracing technology.

Ministers discussed the importance of ensuring and increasing the public's trust in government for the ability to use technology tools to help manage Coronavirus spread in the community.

Supporting decision making

Ministers discussed the role of data in supporting decision-makers across jurisdictions to make timely, evidence-based decisions to address a range of needs, including social, economic and health.

Ministers noted work underway to identify analytical questions and associated data sharing requirements to support COVID-19 response and recovery, and agreed to work collegiately to investigate effective solutions that support decision-making, including through a dedicated official-level group.

Ministers agreed to meet regularly every four weeks' for the medium term.

New Zealand is not a party to this communiqué.

Information on the Australian Data and Digital Council, including previous meeting communiqués, can be found at www.pmc.gov.au/ADDC

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