Third report on the operation and effectiveness of COVIDSafe and the National COVIDSafe Data Store

16 November 2021 to 15 May 2022

July/August 2022

Title: Third report on the operation and effectiveness of COVIDSafe and the National COVIDSafe data Store

ISBN: 978-1-76007-475-3

Online ISBN: 978-1-76007-476-0

Publications Number: DT0003108

**Copyright**

© 2022 Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

This work is copyright. You may copy, print, download, display and reproduce the whole or part of this work in unaltered form for your own personal use or, if you are part of an organisation, for internal use within your organisation, but only if you or your organisation:

1. do not use the copy or reproduction for any commercial purpose; and
2. retain this copyright notice and all disclaimer notices as part of that copy or reproduction.

Apart from rights as permitted by the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth)or allowed by this copyright notice*,* all other rights are reserved, including (but not limited to) all commercial rights.

Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and other rights to use are to be sent to the Communication and Change Branch, Department of Health and Aged Care, GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601,via e-mail to copyright@health.gov.au.

# Minister’s Foreword

I present this report on the operation and effectiveness of COVIDSafe and the   
National COVIDSafe Data Store (NCDS), to both Houses of Parliament as required under   
section 94ZA of the Privacy Act 1988. This report covers the period 16 November 2021 to   
15 May 2022.

From 26 April 2020 to 15 May 2022, over 7.9 million people have registered to use the COVIDSafe app. For the period of this report, 149,972 people have registered for the COVIDSafe app   
(at 15 May 2022).

During the period of this report, the Commonwealth continued to maintain COVIDSafe for   
Public Health Officials (PHOs) to support contact tracing. However, jurisdictions continued to shift their focus away from intensive contact tracing.

There were no new uploads of data to the NCDS, and access to COVIDSafe data by PHOs was minimal for this reporting period.

# Purpose of this Report

This report discusses the operation and effectiveness of COVIDSafe and the NCDS, for the period   
16 November 2021 to 15 May 2022.

The report is delivered to Parliament by the Minister for Health in accordance with section   
94ZA of the Privacy Act 1988 (the Act).

# Operation of the COVIDSafe app and the National COVIDSafe Data Store

During this reporting period, maintenance of the technical operation of the COVIDSafe app and NCDS continued. Monitoring of the operation and performance of the app’s hosting environment remained a priority, ensuring the app functioned effectively.

On 22 December 2021, updates to translations of the privacy policy were made to the COVIDSafe app and COVIDSafe.gov.au. These were in response to recommendations by the Office of the Australian Information Commission’s (OAIC’s) COVIDSafe Assessment Report Number 3, to ensure users continued to be provided clear and accurate information regarding COVIDSafe privacy.

# Effectiveness of the COVIDSafe app and the National COVIDSafe Data Store

Since the commencement of COVIDSafe to 15 May 2022, COVIDSafe has reported:

* 792 uploads.
* 1.654 million handshakes.
* 37,677 encounters; and
* 2,829 potential close contacts.

During the period 16 November 2021 to 15 May 2022, no additional uploads of data from COVID positive cases were made to the NCDS and subsequently no additional handshakes, encounters or close contacts were identified.

COVIDSafe remained available for PHOs to identify close contacts. My department continued   
to engage with, and provide support to, state and territory officials through the Implementation Management Committee (IMC).

# Privacy

My department continued to monitor the effectiveness of the privacy controls, ensuring privacy risks were addressed. During the reporting period, the department considered and addressed all recommendations from Assessment 3 by the OAIC, covering the COVIDSafe application functionality, privacy policy and collection notices. The department also responded to the OAIC recommendations and suggestions contained in Assessment 4.

# Conclusion

Throughout this reporting period, the COVIDSafe app and NCDS remained operational, and were updated and maintained for use by state and territory PHO’s for contact tracing.

# Attachments A - COVIDSafe app activity statistics

## Reporting Period - Cumulative from 16 November 2021 to 15 May 2022

For the purposes of this report encounters are defined as interactions that are within 1.5 metres   
for 15 minutes or more. Encounters of 1 minute or more in duration are not included in this report.

|  | NSW | VIC | QLD | SA | WA | TAS | NT | ACT | TOTAL |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Uploads by COVIDSafe users who tested positive to COVID-19 | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np |
| Handshakes contained in the uploads | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np |
| Encounters contained in the uploads that are within 1.5 metres for 15 minutes or more | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np |
| Unique potential close contacts generating the uploaded handshakes within 1.5 metres for 15 minutes or more | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np | np |
| Note: np - not published as these relate to a very small number of uploads. | | | | | | | | | |

## Reporting Period - Cumulative from 26 April 2020 to 15 May 2022

|  | NSW | VIC | QLD | SA | WA | TAS | NT | ACT | TOTAL |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Uploads by COVIDSafe users who tested positive to COVID-19 | 125 | 661 | np | np | np | np | np | np | 792 |
| Handshakes contained in the uploads | 251,153 | 1,396,574 | 3,293 | np | 955 | 2,026 | np | np | 1,654,001 |
| Encounters contained in the uploads that are within 1.5 metres for 15 minutes or more | 10,792 | 26,414 | 190 | np | 170 | 111 | np | np | 37,677 |
| Unique potential close contacts generating the uploaded handshakes within 1.5 metres for 15 minutes or more | 1,041 | 1,733 | 34 | np | 12 | 9 | np | np | 2,829 |
| Note: np - not published as these relate to a very small number of uploads. | | | | | | | | | |

## Key Definitions

Uploads: Number of unique people who have had their data uploaded to the NCDS.

Handshake: A single Bluetooth exchange between two devices. Contact details such as date, duration, and proximity are collected around the handshake.

Encounter: An encounter is an interaction between two people who have the COVIDSafe app who have been in contact of within 1.5 metres for 15 minutes or more. The algorithm change to one minute was implemented on 15 October 2021, resulting data has not been included in this report.

Potential Close Contact: Number of potential close contacts identified after the data of a positive case has been uploaded.