



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care

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



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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



	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	TOTAL
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.