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Attorney-General
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THE HON. GREG HUNT MP
Minister for Health

Media Release

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Privacy protections for COVIDSafe App enshrined in law

Strict privacy protections for users of the COVIDSafe app will now be enshrined in law after legislation introduced by the Morrison Government was today passed by Parliament.

The app is an important tool in the fight against COVID-19, and the Privacy Amendment (Public Health Contact Information) Act, 2020, should give Australians full confidence that their private information is in safe hands.

“This legislation clearly defines the very limited circumstances in which COVIDSafe data can be collected, used or disclosed, as well as prescribing significant criminal and civil penalties for any misuse,” Attorney-General Christian Porter said.

“That includes jail terms of up to five years, or a fine of \$63,000 per offence. It is also a criminal offence under the legislation for anyone to coerce a person to use the app, to store or transfer COVIDSafe data to a country outside Australia, and to decrypt app data.”

Minister for Health Greg Hunt said the app had already been downloaded more than 5.68 million times.

“The COVIDSafe app will help protect people and the community. It will enable public health officials to quickly notify individuals who have been in contact with a person who has tested positive,” Minister Hunt said.

“Having an extra level of community protection gives the Government the confidence it needs to continue easing restrictions, and reopen our economy.”

Under the legislation, data can only be accessed by authorised state and territory health officials for contact tracing purposes after a user who has tested positive to the virus consents to their encrypted data being uploaded.

The operation of the legislation will be subject to independent oversight by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Following royal assent, the privacy legislation will replace the previous protections that were introduced by Ministerial Determination under the Biosecurity Act on 25 April, 2020.

Authorised by Christian Porter, Liberal Party of Australia, Parliament House, Canberra