



The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Minister for Government Services

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Dear Colleagues

I am writing to provide an update on Australia's discussions with Apple and Google on sovereign approaches to digital contact tracing for COVID-19 and their Exposure Notification Framework (ENF).

On 13 November 2020, I sent a letter on behalf of the **Section 33** **Section 33** Australia to the CEOs of Apple and Google. The letter set out our countries' shared desire to manage the pandemic – including digital interventions – in ways best suited to our citizens, and invited the CEOs to meet to discuss how we might work together to manage the pandemic, while also retaining the rights of democratic Governments.

On 24 November, I met with **Section 47F** **Section** to discuss the applicability of the ENF to our public health outcomes, and their support for our respective governments' approaches to public health-centred digital contact tracing. I stressed the importance of centralised, government-led approach to contact tracing for those countries that choose it. Australia's world-leading, public-health-centred contact tracing process is an exemplar for public-health centred approaches and has directly helped us to successfully manage the spread of COVID-19.

In the meeting, Apple and Google committed to work with us to find the best solution for our individual countries. They are currently considering whether they can provide us with the underlying ENF technology and allow it to be incorporated into our sovereign health responses.

In parallel, the Australian Government has been investigating options to deliver Bluetooth performance improvements to Australia's COVIDSafe app, while retaining our current contact tracing processes. On 19 December 2020, Australia successfully implemented the new Herald Bluetooth protocol into COVIDSafe. Herald improves the way the COVIDSafe app captures close contacts, meaning health officials and contact tracers have more accurate data to trace the spread of COVID-19, isolate individuals and pinpoint hot spots.

Herald introduces new techniques that provide reliable Bluetooth communication across a wide range of devices. It has been developed and open sourced as part of the Linux Foundation Public Health initiative which was announced in July 2020. These techniques address the limitations of Bluetooth apps when running in the background on iOS devices. The Herald Protocol will give COVIDSafe more regular and accurate information on close

contacts, which in turn helps contact tracers rapidly find and alert people who may have been exposed to the virus.

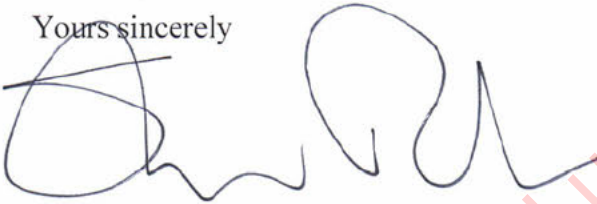
The Herald-enabled COVIDSafe system allows our health officials to continue doing the great job they have been doing over the past 10 months to manage the pandemic in Australia. It is designed to provide them with the right data to analyse clusters and identify hot spots, respond to outbreaks, and trace the source of infection for all confirmed cases. Australia is the first country to adopt Herald. We have worked closely with Apple, Google and the developers of this protocol. I hope that other countries benefit from the work that we have done to adopt Herald into COVIDSafe. The source code will be made available on the covidsafe.gov.au website and we would be happy to share the performance results with you.

I am confident that this development will support Australia as we prepare to go back to work in COVID safe environments, travel to see families and friends at Christmas, and get the economy moving again.

I look forward to our countries working together to continue to improve our response to the pandemic.

If you would like any further information my contact is Mr Anthony Warnock, Chief Technology Officer at the Digital Transformation Agency. Mr Warnock can be contacted by email at Section 47F

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Robert', written over a large red watermark that says 'Released under FOIA Act'.

Stuart Robert