



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

Ref: MS20-000022

Dear Minister

I write to you on behalf of the Australian Government at an extraordinary time globally. Our nations are facing an unprecedented challenge as we grapple with the health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. These times call for strong international cooperation against a virus that abides by no jurisdictional boundaries.

In the face of such significant challenges, the role of governments become clear. We must make sovereign decisions to protect the health of our citizens and the economic wellbeing of our nations. I commend the decisive actions you have taken to manage the pandemic on behalf of your people.

In Australia, we have moved swiftly to contain COVID-19. We have relied on contact tracing methods and restrictions to help us find a path out of the crisis. Like you, we have implemented a sovereign digital response, launching our contact tracing application, *COVIDSafe*, on 26 April 2020.

In the six weeks following its launch, *COVIDSafe* has successfully augmented the efforts of our public health officials to find people who have come into contact with COVID-19. More than 6.2 million Australians have registered for the app. This represents one of the fastest uptake rates among global contact tracing apps. The app is underpinned by legislation and users are protected by strong privacy and security controls.

Despite our great success so far, we cannot become complacent. We are continuously monitoring developments around the world and are looking for opportunities to improve *COVIDSafe* app. At a technical level, we are focused on continually improving the performance, accessibility and compatibility of the app to enable more users to take advantage of it.

We have been working with Apple and Google through the initial release of its Exposure Notification Framework (ENF) for contact tracing. The ENF technology has the potential to enhance the performance of contact tracing apps that use Bluetooth technology, including our own *COVIDSafe*. Currently, we are testing Bluetooth performance under the ENF to confirm its potential impact on our existing contact tracing capability.

However, the ENF also includes some elements that would require fundamental changes to the Australian Government's approach to contact tracing—which has, up to this point, proved to be very successful. Apple and Google have indicated the ENF's decentralised contact tracing model can only be adopted in its entirety (that is, the operating model changes must be adopted in addition to any Bluetooth improvements). This approach challenges the Governments' rights to make sovereign decisions for the benefits of their people.

You may be experiencing similar challenges in considering the ENF.

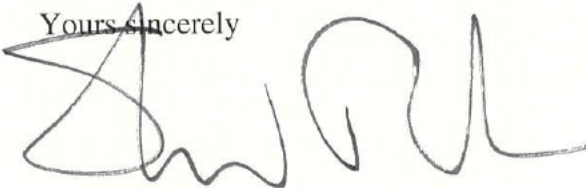
I would like to open a dialogue with a selection of countries, **Section 33** who were first-movers in implementing a sovereign digital response to COVID-19, to explore your views and experiences in response to COVID-19 and your approach to the ENF. A key outcome of the meeting would be an agreement on how we might collectively leverage any benefits of the Apple and Google ENF, while maintaining our sovereign health and contact tracing capabilities.

With this in mind, I invite you to join me at an international Ministerial-level meeting on Thursday 18 June 2020 at 0800 UTC. **Section 33**

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I am confident our discussions and actions can help us to continue to manage and improve our response to COVID-19. I would welcome your response confirming your availability to attend this meeting by Tuesday 16 June 2020. My senior official on this matter is Mr Randall Brugeaud, CEO of the Digital Transformation Agency, who can be contacted by email at ceo.office@dta.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Robert