



29 MAY 2020

Today, the Australian Data and Digital Council Ministers met (by teleconference) to discuss data and digital matters and shared challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following Ministers attended the meeting:

- The Hon Stuart Robert MP (Commonwealth)
- The Hon Victor Dominello MP (New South Wales)
- Parliamentary Secretary, Danny Pearson MP (Victoria)
- The Hon Mick de Brenni MP (Queensland)
- The Hon Dave Kelly MLA (Western Australia)
- The Hon David Pisoni MP (South Australia)
- The Hon Michael Ferguson MP (Tasmania)
- Mr Mick Gentleman MLA (Australian Capital Territory)
- The Hon Kris Faafoi (New Zealand)

Governments collectively continue to support COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

COVIDSafe app

Ministers noted more Australians are downloading the COVIDSafe app, with current downloads at around 6.1 million, helping to speed up contact tracing when needed.

Role of data in supporting decision-makers

Ministers discussed the importance of having access to accurate and timely data when making decisions. Jurisdictions agreed to continue to work together to identify data needed to answer specific policy questions. Data sharing is advancing, with careful consideration being given to relevant protections, including to the privacy of Australians.

Enabling digital inclusion

Ministers agreed to continue to prioritise digital inclusion when agreeing future digital transformation initiatives. Ministers acknowledged the importance of the digital transformation of government services reaching the whole community, to ensure no one is left behind by the digital divide.

Affordability, along with digital connectivity, skills, and service design, are significant factors of the digital divide. Low income, lack of employment, and low education are considered significant contributing factors to digital disadvantage and prevent people from using critical digitally enabled government services.

Ministers agreed to conduct a feasibility assessment on affordability options for Australians at risk of digital disadvantage to access government services online and by telephone, as a priority collaborative digital inclusion initiative.

Ministers noted the reinvigoration of a digital inclusion working group, led by the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland, to develop a program of priority digital inclusion initiatives for the Council's consideration at a future meeting.

A framework for digital identity

Ministers acknowledged one of the biggest opportunities for making government services digital is the ability for a user to prove who they are. Ministers discussed development of the Trusted Digital Identity Framework and the potential it provides for further alignment and interoperability between all levels of government systems. Jurisdictions will continue to work with the Commonwealth Digital Transformation Agency as the Framework develops.

Working together to better understand and respond to natural disasters

Recent bushfires and associated severe weather systems, flooding and storms across Australia highlight the need for an integrated response to natural disasters across all levels of government.

At the COAG meeting on 13 March 2020, First Ministers asked the Australian Data and Digital Council, in consultation with the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, to improve national natural hazard data and intelligence to enable the development of new information products such as a national fire map.

Ministers agreed to explore sharing critical data across jurisdictions relating to bushfires, floods and severe storms to help better prepare, respond and recover from future natural disasters.

Additionally, Ministers continue to discuss approaches to streamlining how the public engages with government at critical life events. One of the greatest challenges to this approach is that support for key life events involves services delivered across a number of agencies and layers of government. In recognition that natural disasters are becoming more frequent, Ministers agreed to work together to ensure people get the advice and help they need when they need it.

New Zealand is not a party to this communiqué.

Information on the Australian Data and Digital Council, including previous meeting communiqués, can be found at www.pmc.gov.au/ADDC