

#COVIDSafe App and Data Privacy

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By David Wiebb, President DAMA Australia

Its Privacy Awareness Week and I'd like to post some thoughts about the #COVIDSafe App

The #COVIDSafe Contact Tracing app was released nearly three weeks ago and it has now been downloaded over 5M times.

DAMA Australia has conducted an initial assessment of the App and has released a statement on it a week ago. You can find our media release [here](#).

Following that I was interviewed by TRFM Gippsland Radio on Monday 4th May, you can listen my on air interview [here](#).

Our media statement and my comments on air said that that data privacy principles of the App conform to what we expect as best practice for Data Governance, in that the owner of the data (the person using the app) has control of when personal contact tracing data is released into the cloud.

The rules defining how personal data is shared, when this occurs and who uses the data is defined in [legislation](#). The Australian Government has developed a privacy impact assessment of the #COVIDSafe is available [here](#).

All this good and sound from a Data Governance perspective.

In summary, the #COVIDSafe Contact Tracing App is an excellent public health policy initiative.

[The practical implementation of the #COVIDSafe app, however in my opinion has been less than successful.](#)

1. The implementation of the iOS version of the App in particular has been [reported](#) to have some significant issues which compromise its effectiveness.
2. In my opinion, the Government has not given enough priority to engaging with the Australian public and the media about how the App is meant to work, communicating the actions that the legislation permits, and defining which actions are not permitted by the Law. The lack of accurate commentary in the media has resulted in unnecessary stress being put into people's lives because there wasn't enough information being shared with the public.
3. Following on from above, the Australian media has misunderstood the data privacy principles underpinning the App: we are aware that some comments are not legal under the legislation. For example we are aware of comments like ***"the App would be good for monitoring access to a sporting stadium, going to the pub or eating a meal inside a café"***. Clearly none of those things are allowable under the legislation, and these are messages that must be communicated to the Australian public many times over.

What should be done?

1. I strongly urge the Australian Government to iterate on the design of the iOS App and **improve** its functionality.
2. I would want to see **significantly increased** communications from the Australian Government about the rights of the data owners. This includes communicating, more frequently, information on the Data Privacy Principles and Practices performed by Government in managing the data created by the App.
3. The Australian media need to **significantly increase** the accuracy of comments made to the Public, particularly is emphasising the legal uses of the App. The messaging across all media channels needs to **strongly communicate** correct use of the App, especially now at this critical time of restarting the Australian Economy and going forward into the foreseeable future.
4. The Australian public needs to **immediately** see the source code of the App (both the Android and iOS versions) so that Industry Professionals (including DAMA Australia) can make their own assessment and subsequently inform the Australian Public.