

# AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SCIENCES STATEMENT ON COVID-19



Australian  
Academy of Health and  
Medical Sciences

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**The Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences supports the introduction and use of the COVIDSafe app as a valuable and important innovation in Australia's continuing efforts to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## ***COVID-19 in Australia to date***

Australia has made important decisions that with the cooperation and supportive actions of the Australian community, have achieved effective public health management of the COVID-19 pandemic to date, and have helped to protect Australians. The Academy has highlighted the need for governments, health services and the wider Australian public alike to work together, and to act appropriately and responsibly to limit the impact and spread of the virus. We acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of everyone involved so far. Continued acceptance of this collective responsibility is crucial to ongoing containment of the pandemic in Australia.

## ***What will happen next?***

Australia has lifted some restrictions and is planning further relaxation of restrictions over the coming weeks and months. During this time, we will need to navigate the complexities of protecting public health, while supporting health and wellbeing, including mental health, more broadly.

A key component of Australia's success to date has been to test individuals for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, isolate those who test positive and rapidly trace and quarantine their contacts. As restrictions are lifted these processes, together with expanded testing for COVID-19 in the wider community and in vulnerable populations, will be crucial. The COVIDSafe app is designed to enhance the speed and efficiency of contact tracing by public health teams. Its widespread use could add particular value in containing transmission and community outbreaks related to individuals who test positive and are not linked to a known case. While our population is minimally immune, fast and thorough COVID-19 tracking will be crucial if we are to prevent a major pandemic resurgence. With the introduction of the COVIDSafe app, community confidence and hence uptake will be maximised by ensuring that privacy concerns are addressed, and that the added value of the app is being rigorously monitored and assessed.

## ***A fundamental framework for success – a partnership with Government***

In our 20 March 2020 statement, we highlighted the importance of robust policy measures, at a time when Australia was entering a very challenging period for managing COVID-19 and faced some difficult decisions. We welcomed the efforts of Australian governments to consult with experts, and we encourage their ongoing engagement as scientific evidence continues to emerge. The Academy has actively contributed through the Rapid Research Information Forum, chaired by Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel AO FAA FTSE FAHMS. We have also established a new COVID-19 Expert Committee, chaired by Professor Tania Sorrell AM FAHMS, through which we will contribute to discussions on the next steps and strategies for the nation. In addition, we have initiated a webinar series to provide an authoritative, interactive source of information. The first in this series explored [how Australia can chart a course for resilience and recovery](#) from the pandemic.

Research and innovation will remain crucial as we navigate this pandemic. Australian commitments to lead research into the virus, the disease and its broader health and socioeconomic consequences, and the development of vaccines and treatments are an important part of the global effort to tackle the pandemic.