



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

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Agenda Item: 4

COVID-19 and the Digital Economy

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: Australia



**Digital Economy Steering Group Special
Virtual Meeting on COVID-19
26 June 2020**

Australia

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ISSUE	POLICY INTERVENTIONS, INITIATIVES, LESSONS LEARNED, AND SOLUTIONS IN RELATION TO THE ISSUE	ACTUAL/EXPECTED OUTCOME
<p>a) Business continuity and resilience</p>	<p>Given about a third of Australian businesses have encouraged their businesses to work from home, The Australian Government is supporting businesses to go digital and boost adoption of secure digital technologies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing resources and guidance for businesses through the central web portal - business.gov.au - including online payments, setting up a business website, online marketing, cyber threats management and protecting customers' privacy. • Connecting SMEs with ICT and digital facilitators through the Government's Entrepreneurs' Programme. • Providing small business with low cost, high quality advice on a range of digital solutions to grow their digital capabilities. 	<p>Increased digital awareness and safe online working environment.</p>
<p>b) Exchange and use of data in a secure manner</p>	<p>On 26 April 2020, the Australian Government released the COVIDSafe app to provide a new tool for state and territory health authorities to undertake contact tracing for people exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19). COVIDSafe is a voluntary application that can be installed on Android and iOS personal devices to assist Australia's efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>COVIDSafe works by using Bluetooth signals to record encrypted data about close contacts with other users. When a user tests positive for COVID-19, they have the option of uploading the encrypted data on their device to the National COVIDSafe Data Store.</p> <p>State and territory contact tracers can access the National COVIDSafe Data Store to anonymously notify the positive user's close contacts that they may have been</p>	<p>Easier contact tracing for people tested positive to COVID-19 while ensuring protection of individual's privacy.</p>

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	<p>exposed to COVID-19. This allows contact tracers to inform people at risk of COVID-19 about what to do next, such as getting tested.</p> <p>Initially, COVIDSafe was supported by a determination made under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>. On 14 May 2020, the Australian Parliament passed the <i>Privacy Amendment (Public Health Contact Information) Act 2020</i> to support the COVIDSafe app and provide strong ongoing privacy protections.</p> <p>These legal protections for data collected by COVIDSafe give users confidence in the safety and security of the app and the privacy of their data. The protections ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Data from COVIDSafe can only be used to support state and territory health authorities' contact tracing efforts, (ii) Consent is required before data is uploaded to the National COVIDSafe Data Store, and a requirement that (iii) Data is deleted at the end of the pandemic, and that (iv) No one can be required to download or use COVIDSafe. <p>Breach of these protections is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment and/or a fine of 300 penalty units (\$63,000 for individuals), or alternatively is considered an interference with privacy and subject to penalties under the Privacy Act. The Act also ensures appropriate oversight by Australia's domestic privacy regulator, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.</p>	

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<p>c) Use of digital technologies and solutions including for tracing purpose</p>	<p>In addition to the COVIDSafe App, Australia has provided up to date official information and advice about the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation through the Coronavirus Australia App. Australians can check symptoms and get notified when urgent information and updates are published.</p> <p>Australia’s business advisory services, including Entrepreneurs’ Programme (EP) and the Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS) Digital Solutions program have pivoted to digital and remote delivery of advisory services to support businesses respond to COVID-19.</p>	<p>Provide up-to-date advice to Australians and businesses in order to stop the spread of, and respond to, COVID-19.</p>
<p>d) Secure and trusted online environment</p>	<p>Shortly after the Australian Government announced its COVID-19 restrictions in March, the Australian Cyber Security Growth Network (AustCyber) released a comprehensive cyber security guide for startups and small businesses with remote working. The guide has been shared with almost 1.8 million businesses. AustCyber also ran a webinar on managing the cyber risks of remote work.</p> <p>Protecting your small business from cyber-attacks during COVID-19 - This guide has been developed to help small and micro businesses adapt to working during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will help businesses with simple and actionable advice in order to both identify common and emerging cyber threats and develop resilient business practices to protect themselves.</p> <p>Australia established a temporary Commonwealth COVID-19 Counter Fraud Taskforce, which has engaged with domestic and international counterparts to share timely intelligence and information about emerging risks and trends relating to COVID-19 including fraud and scam activity.</p>	<p>Support a safe online environment for consumers and business.</p>

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<p>e) Preparations for economic recovery post-COVID</p>	<p>The Australian Government’s economic support package of \$259 billion represents fiscal and balance sheet support across the forward estimates of 13.3 per cent of annual GDP. Direct fiscal measures are equivalent to around 6.9 per cent of GDP. The Government’s economic support package has provided timely support to affected workers, businesses and the broader community, and has kept Australians in work, and businesses in business.</p>	<p>Support to employees and businesses to stay in business and recover from any economic downturn from COVID-19.</p>