

COVIDSafe Tracking and the Rights of an Individual

The Australian government has launched the COVIDSafe app to trace and monitor the spread of Covid-19. Everyone in the community is encouraged to sign up, although citizens are being informed that this is voluntary. The health authorities have stated that this app will enable them to track the origin and potential spread of this highly contagious virus across communities.

This new level of surveillance should be scrutinised and assessed by all citizens to ensure a fair balance remains between helping government agencies manage Covid-19 and our individual freedoms and right to privacy.

The rule of law requires agencies to enforce the law using powers that remain controlled, monitored and transparent. These requirements maintain public confidence and ensure those who have the power to track citizens do not abuse this power.

Consider the below questions and decide whether you think the COVIDSafe fairly balances government power with our individual rights.

Questions for Students

1. Outline the reasons why the Government has introduced COVIDSafe and what it hopes to achieve from the app.
2. Identify the information that COVIDSafe stores about mobile phone users who download and use the app?
3. When can the government access the COVIDSafe information stored on your mobile phone?
4. Outline the reasons why the Government has introduced COVIDSafe and what it hopes to achieve.
5. Outline some of the privacy concerns regarding COVIDSafe.
6. When legislation is introduced in May 2020, recommend what constraints need to be included to ensure the information collected by COVIDSafe is not abused by government agencies?
7. Assess whether the COVIDSafe fairly balances government power with our individual rights for privacy.

Resources

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covidsafe-app>

<https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/press-conference-about-the-covidsafe-app-launch>

<https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Human-rights-scrutiny/PublicSectorGuidanceSheets/Pages/Privacyandreputation.aspx>



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<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/privacy-experts-are-concerned-about-the-government-s-coronavirus-tracing-app-here-s-why>

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2020L00480>