

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE
Department of Health
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
6 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000080

Question Subject: Data Management Protocols

Type of Questions: Hansard, page 7, Wednesday 6 May 2020

Questioner: Senator McKim

Question:

Senator McKIM: Could I ask the same question with regard to the data management protocols or agreements that are in negotiation with state and territory health authorities. Will those agreements be made public and, if so, when?

Ms Edwards: In response to a question from the chair, we indicated that we're very close to concluding those agreements now. We expect them to be in place by the end of the week. I would expect that we could make them public, but I will need to check with state and territory colleagues as to any aspect that I'm not aware of. I wouldn't see there are any issues. We think we probably can make them public. If there's a reason not to, we'll make sure we explain to the committee why that is.

Answer:

Subject to agreement from state and territory public health authorities, the Agreements with states and territories on access, use and disclosure of COVIDSafe App data, will be published on the Department of Health website.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

6 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000084

Question Subject: Extent of contact tracing and funding

Type of Questions: Hansard, page 24, Wednesday 6 May 2020

Questioner: Senator Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: Thank you, Senator Siewert. I have just a couple of questions before I hand to Senator Watt. Following up from Senator Siewert's question, the government has made it very clear that the COVID-safe future is around tracing, testing and quarantining those who become unwell. The states and territories have shouldered a lot of this, in terms of the contact tracing, Acknowledging some of the limitations of the app, is the Commonwealth going to provide extra support to the states and territories around contact tracing—the manual side of the business—because it is so labour intensive and slow? That's my first question. My second is: have any states and territories asked for any additional support?

Ms Edwards: To go to the second question first, I'm not aware of any request, specifically, into contact tracing.

CHAIR: Right.

Ms Edwards: Obviously, we're providing large amounts of support to state and territory health systems, including a commitment to provide 50 per cent of all of the health costs. I would have to take on notice the extent to which that includes contact tracing. But contact tracing is a traditional state and territory function, which they've stepped up to do—

CHAIR: Yes, I understand that. I was a health minister for eight years, and I was involved in a lot of contact tracing.

Ms Edwards: Of course. And it's very well done all over Australia. That's one of the key things we've done. I'm not aware of any requests for particular support there. As I've said, I'll take it on notice. But they've stepped up to do what's traditionally their role, and it's a true partnership with states and territories in this response, and it's gone fine.

CHAIR: So will you see if the 50 per cent funding share includes the public health authorities, as opposed to hospital costs?

Ms Edwards: I'll confirm if it does. I simply don't know the answer. What we're making a major contribution to is broader than hospital costs, but I'm not aware of any requests for a particular augmentation in that regard. I'll take it on notice.

Answer:

On 13 March 2020, the Australian Government and all state and territory (states) governments signed the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response (the Partnership). Through this partnership, the Australian Government provides an uncapped 50 per cent financial contribution for costs incurred by states in their health response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

This contribution is for both the direct costs of diagnosing and treating COVID-19, as well as the broader public health costs of minimising the spread of COVID-19.

Costs associated with state health authorities expanding their contact tracing programs, which are critical public health activities to minimise the spread of COVID-19 in Australia, and as such receive Australian Government funding through the Partnership.

The Department of Health has not received any requests from states and territories for additional financial assistance with regard to contact tracing using the app.