



Sunday 26 April 2020

Voluntarily Downloading COVIDsafe app will stem the spread in rural and remote communities

The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) says the benefits of the government's new COVIDSafe app in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic far outweigh any perceived risk.

The app, which is available to all Australians to voluntarily download from 6.00pm tonight, will help protect lives by alerting people who may have come in contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

ACRRM President Dr Ewen McPhee has communicated with the highest level of government to discuss issues of privacy and confidentiality, particularly for communities and healthcare workers in rural and remote Australia.

"I've been quite dogged in seeking information and have stressed the importance that no data leaves the phone unless it is authorised by the user," Dr McPhee says.

"Information is purely stored to be accessible if a person is diagnosed as positive, and to enable contact to be made with people who have been in close proximity of that person.

"The app can be unlocked by the COVID-19 positive person when a public health physician contacts them with a specific code.

"I am reassured that no geo-location data, other personally sensitive information or third-party access has been implemented."

Dr McPhee says the app is a positive step to reduce the impact of what could be a life-threatening illness.

"Being able to confidentially identify when a smart phone has been near the phone of another person with the app, who has contracted COVID-19, will enable us to act promptly, apply treatment early, and stem the spread," ACRRM President Dr Ewen McPhee says.

"This app will protect Australians in cities, in rural communities and in our remote and isolated regions and I encourage all to voluntarily sign up, to not only protect themselves and their families, but also protect the healthcare workers who put themselves at risk to treat and save lives," Dr McPhee adds.

"As well as being a rapid response tool to protect people's health, the app will speed up the opportunity to return to life as we usually know it, reducing the social distancing and isolation measures that have been effective to date.



“There’s so much more to gain with the COVIDSafe app than there is to lose,” he says.

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For interviews with ACRRM president Dr Ewen McPhee, please contact Marketing and Communications Manager Petrina Smith by phoning 0414 820 847, 1800 223 226 or emailing p.smith@acrrm.org.au,

ABOUT ACRRM

The [Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine](https://www.acrrm.org.au) is the only College in Australia entirely dedicated to training and supporting rural General Practitioners and Rural Generalists to serve rural and remote communities.

The College vision is to have the right doctors, in the right places, with the right skills, providing rural and remote people with excellent health care.

For more information, [visit acrrm.org.au](https://www.acrrm.org.au).