

The COVIDSAFE Phone App

a little **CRC**

At this stage you should have heard about *Covidsafe*. Please, if you have a smartphone:

1. Open your App store or Google Play Store.
2. Search for 'Covidsafe' and click on the first option in the list which features the picture on the top right of this page.
3. You should see 'Australian Department of Health' written on the Covidsafe app page.
4. Install.
5. Open.
6. Register your details as asked.
7. Keep *Covidsafe* running in the background. That's it!



Some misunderstandings I may be able to clear up for any doubting thomases:

Isn't this just some complicated new government tracking system which will give the government the ability to know where I go and what I do on my phone every second of the day?

ANSWERED →

WHAT DOES COVIDSAFE DO?

When you run *Covidsafe* for the first time it will ask you to register your a name and mobile phone number. These are stored on a secure database, alongside a single code number which will henceforth identify your phone.

Covidsafe then runs continuously in the background and uses your phone's Bluetooth radio to measure the distance to other phones running *Covidsafe*, and to exchange your code number with these other phones via Bluetooth.

When you press 'Upload my data' (say you're diagnosed with Covid-19), *Covidsafe* will electronically send the code numbers of all phones who have been within a 1.5 metre radius for 15 minutes continuously, within the last 28 days, to your State Government. The government can then automatically create a list with the name and mobile phone numbers of all of those who you have been in proximity to. This will hopefully give them a chance to rapidly and efficiently track and trace Covid-19 in the community.

How do we know Covidsafe does what the government claims?

ANSWERED →

Will the app be effective?

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Thankfully, for a change, NO! This app provides the best possible security and privacy while providing contact tracing.

Other than Bluetooth radio data, the app does not access any other parts of your phone.

Other than for initial registration, the app does not access the internet (until you get Covid-19 or a phone call asking you to manually press the 'Upload my data' button).

The app never accesses your GPS location. (You may find the app asks for permission to access your phone's location. This is due to your phone grouping the Bluetooth tracing alongside the GPS function.) You can even turn off the 'Location' function on your phone and *Covidsafe* will still work, provided Bluetooth is left switched on.

"Facebook, your internet browser, fitness tracking apps and most phone games provide you far worse privacy compared to Covidsafe."

Perhaps you heard that the government has not publically released the source code for *Covidsafe*? The *source code* contains all the instructions which make the app run. It allows you the check the app is doing what it says and nothing nefarious is happening in the background. The government says it will release this source code soon. Fortunately this is not necessary:

The hacker community has already *decompiled* the app (this means they have accurately re-created the source code). Security experts and mobile phone developers have been into pretty much every nook and cranny of *Covidsafe* and have publically released the source code and all their findings and data. By and large they give

Covidsafe a gold star. This is a hyper-critical and sceptical community so their stamp of approval means a lot.

Reading these reports is what prompted me to install the app and to write this article. If you're interested type this into your web browser address bar:

twitter.com/matthewrdev/status/1254336105203200000

This is the biggest doubt, for me. I don't think my phone is ever within a 1.5 metre radius of anyone else's phone for 15 minutes continuously. However this is no reason not to install *Covidsafe*.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10am to 5pm • Thursday, Friday 10 am to 6pm