

14 December 2023

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Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

To whom it may concern,

Re: The impact of the measures the Federal Government took during the COVID 19 pandemic

I wish to express my profound disappointment in the actions the federal government took during the COVID 19 pandemic. Not only the effect it had on myself and my family but on the broader community.

It was evident early on that COVID 19 was an illness that mostly affected the elderly and this has been born out in the statistics, as the median age of death from or with COVID was 84.2 years (82.6 years for males and 86.2 years for females). This compares with the median age of death in 2019 of 81.7 years (78.8 for males and 84.8 for females).

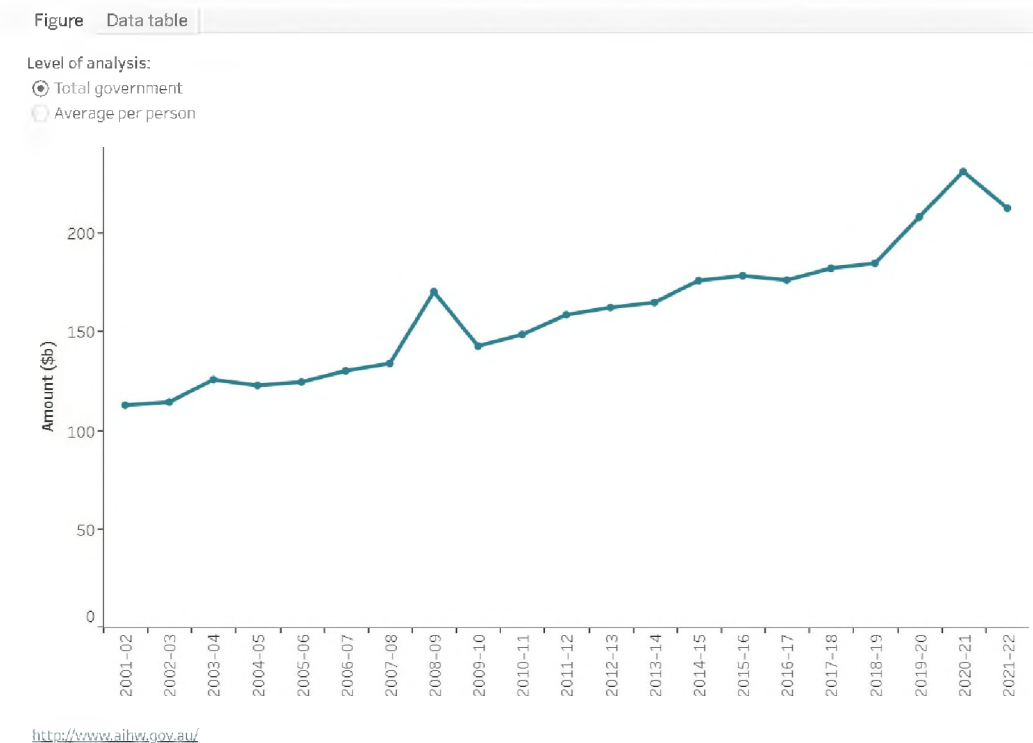
Based on these statistics the question must be asked as to why support payments were offered to health working age people if they were put out of work due to lockdowns. The fact that these payments were offered enabled the premiers of the states to enforce lockdowns without receiving a backlash from the populous.

It would have been prudent that instead of offering support payments, government resources would be more effectively utilised by putting in place systems to protect the elderly and the vulnerable, this being the cohort most at risk of serious illness.

The government committed \$291 billion in direct economic support during the pandemic, as the economy was stalled this has now created inflationary pressures and we are now apparently in a cost of living crisis. This is a classic case of actions have consequences, and this was completely foreseeable. Please see graph below for support payments

Before 2019–20, welfare spending in Australia had grown with modest rates of 3.4% in 2017–18 and 1.4% in 2018–19, then reached growth rates in 2019–20 and 2020–21 of 12.7% and 11.1% respectively (Figure 1). Total welfare expenditure decreased 8.0% in 2021–22 in real terms. However, the 2021–22 value was still above the long-term trend (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Total government welfare expenditure in Australia, constant prices, 2001–02 to 2021–22



As a non vaccinating family I was deeply disturbed that the federal government provided the state governments access to the Australian Immunisation register. This enabled the state governments to introduce no jab no job. Coercive vaccination policies have no place in a liberal democracy, which up to the start of COVID I believed Australia was. For some people who chose not to take the vaccine, they were barred from working and had to sell their house (██████████) and, for others they were on welfare payments (██████████). Why would the government deliberately make people unemployed? That is a breach of human rights, if we are unable to participate fully in society because we have chosen not to take a medicine, the state effectively owns us.

In closing I would like to state that the response to COVID has shaken my belief in the government and the medical system. It was total overreach, yes this was a novel virus, however there was already a pandemic response plan which Tony Abbot devised, for reasons which have never being fully explained the government chose to ignore this plan and go down an untested, unreasonable plan and we are now living with the consequences.

On a positive note since it was allegedly a one in a hundred year pandemic I won't have to live through another one in my lifetime.

Regards,

Rachel Versteegen

