

I write this as an individual who was adversely affected by the way the Commonwealth and State Governments handled the COVID-19 situation. In considering the scope of the *Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry terms of reference*, there were several issues with how Australia responded to real and perceived health threats of recent events.

1. *Governance including the role of the Commonwealth Government, responsibilities of state and territory governments, national governance mechanisms (such as National Cabinet, the National Coordination Mechanism and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee) and advisory bodies supporting responses to COVID-19.*

Both state and federal governments exhibited gross mismanagement and negligence in how they responded. The TGA banned re-purposing readily available medicines in favour of a novel and under-tested approach, granting “provisional approval” and sidestepping many established checks and balances in the process.

2. *Key health response measures (for example across COVID-19 vaccinations and treatments, key medical supplies such as personal protective equipment, quarantine facilities, and public health messaging).*

The health response measures, which often included questionable (and often violent) law enforcement tactics, rapidly changing restrictions and lockdowns, and border closures often resulting in grief for others wishing to visit friends and family (including missing critical moments particularly in the case of dying or sick loved ones), caused great anguish and community distrust in law enforcement. Countries such as Sweden avoided many COVID-related deaths and illnesses without such extreme and unwarranted measures.

There was unclear information (and some which was later proven to be wrong and misleading) from the mainstream media and government officials alike, but rather than officials attempting to correct or clarify that information, focused its efforts on attacking and vilifying anyone who was attempting to make sense of all this and provide alternative explanations.

3. *Broader health supports for people impacted by COVID-19 and/or lockdowns (for example mental health and suicide prevention supports, and access to screening and other preventive health measures). Support for industry and businesses (for example responding to supply chain and transport issues, addressing labour shortages, and support for specific industries). Financial support for individuals (including income support payments).*

They say prevention is the best medicine, and this is no exception. None of these supports would have been necessary had the measures implemented been reasonable or proportionate. The fact that this is even a question suggests that measures were neither reasonable or proportionate.

From my own experience, such supports were either nonexistent, insufficient or unacceptable. There was no support to people who lost their job because of vaccine mandates, and remained unemployed due to many other employers mandating vaccination as a condition of employment. Many state governments had premiers and public health officials acting in a capacity akin to that of a dictator, mandating masks and vaccines in certain settings where there was no evidence that this was even necessary or reasonable.

As per the above, Australia’s response leaves much to be desired. Indeed, this consultation process itself leaves much to be desired. Many (including myself) were not made aware of this occurring until the deadline was fast approaching. It was quietly extended with the following message hidden within the description “As we have received a number of requests for extensions, the submissions portal will remain open over the Christmas - New Year period.” with no real deadline attached, while people were likely on holiday or taking time off. This is not acceptable, and is inadequate in a consultation purporting to be of significant importance of scope and nature. No attempt has been made to make affected individuals or organisations aware of the consultation period or processes.