

Submission on the ToR of the COVID-19 Response Inquiry

by Fiona Hayward

Introduction: I am from a small town in regional Qld. In April 2020 [REDACTED] was severely injured in a single-vehicle accident and we found ourselves catapulted into the middle of Brisbane for six months while he underwent treatment & rehab at a Metro South Health facility. During this time (Apr - Oct 2020) we experienced firsthand the early and frightening impacts of Covid-19 (lockdowns, screening, quarantine etc).

I can only offer praise for the amazing frontline staff of the Metro South Facility who cared for [REDACTED] until we were able to return home in late 2020.

Having experienced firsthand both metropolitan and regional aspects of the Covid response I respectfully submit on the following ToR:

Governance:

- National Cabinet (est. March 2020)

"Adding in a policy of blanket secrecy about National Cabinet further constrains our ability to hold governments accountable and undermines public trust."

Jacob Deem, *CQUniversity Australia*,

Jennifer Menzies, *Griffith University*

At the National Cabinet, the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers appear as individuals in their role as leaders of their own executives, untethered from their other positions as local members, parliamentarians and leaders of their respective political parties.

A concern with National Cabinet is that

it shifts power further away from Parliament (the people's chosen representatives) and towards individual leaders, who have not necessarily been elected by the people for their suitability as Cabinet members.

This effective removal of a democratic selection process and the potential for individuals to abuse Cabinet power and confidentiality (documents and deliberations are confidential and exempt from freedom of information (FOI) requests) raises concerns and public suspicions as to whose best interests Cabinet decisions might be representing.

Additionally, as an intergovernmental, not inter-parliamentary, body, members of the National Cabinet are not collectively responsible to one Parliament, but individually responsible to nine separate Parliaments. It cannot therefore be held to account by *collective cabinet responsibility* to the Federal Parliament.*

Suggestion: Now Covid has abated, disband the Cabinet.

Should it be necessary to reconvene, assign representatives from State opposition Members, along with State Premiers, OR include Senators from each State to provide more balanced representation. Move away from Cabinet Confidentiality to allow transparency and trust.

* <https://www.auspublaw.org/blog/2020/10/the-national-cabinet-presidentialised-politics-power-sharing-and-a-deficit-in-transparency>

Key Health Response Measures:

- More disclosure of accurate statistics/information would have enabled properly informed choices with regards to treatments/vaccines. Informed Consent is a fundamental cornerstone of good medicine and particularly important when new or experimental treatments are being considered (see link) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430827/>

Considering the Covid-19 vaccines were provisionally approved for emergency use only, a large number of people (myself included) felt that information available was inadequate for them to give informed consent. Information on vaccines made available through state and federal public health websites and systems was very limited and also often confusing or hard to access.

- Having the broadest range of COVID-19 vaccinations and treatments available would have assisted with both prevention and treatment of the virus.

Examples: Encouraging adoption of proactive early intervention protocols for people presenting Covid-positive in the early stages of infection. Well before vaccines were available, early-intervention measures such as Frontline Covid Critical Care Alliance protocols adopted in the USA (see attached link) were being utilised by some practitioners with excellent results.

<https://covid19criticalcare.com/protocol/i-care-early-covid-treatment/>

Adopting a proactive early-intervention response not only has the potential to reduce length and severity of symptoms in an individual thus reducing chances of infecting others, it also has been shown to reduce hospital and ICU admissions, relieving pressures on the hospital system.

A broad range of treatments (both preventative and for active infection) also provides effective choices for those who for various reasons did not undergo Covid-19 emergency-use-approved vaccinations.

Having the option to access varied safe and effective avenues of prevention and treatment is simple common sense, and much excellent information & research (see links below) is now available on the use and effectiveness of various Covid-19 treatments that can be used to inform preparedness for the future.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8884665/>

<https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/15/11/2639>

<https://c19ivm.org/meta.html>

Broader Health Supports:

- Border closures impacted people in many negative ways but regarding health the impacts were disastrous for those who lived just across a State border but usually attended medical facilities in the adjacent State.

Example - two noted instances of families in far northern NSW who were unable to seek urgent medical care from the closest facilities (in QLD) due to border restrictions.

Confusion and onerous restrictions delayed and complicated the situation. In the best interests of public health and democracy, interstate borders need to be open to (at the very least) those who need medical assistance where the closest appropriate facility is across a state border.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/28/unborn-twin-baby-dies-after-delay-approving-mothers-queensland-nsw-border-exemption>

[REDACTED] said he was concerned border complications were placing infants' and children's lives at risk.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-20/tough-qld-border-restrictions-nsw-baby-refused-vital-brain-scan/100393322>

- Other

Transparency (Pfizer contracts,)

The secrecy and lack of transparency around the contract for Pfizer Covid-19 vaccines in Australia has been a source of controversy and public suspicion. Australian citizens have a right to know what contracts our Government has entered into, particularly when public health, accountability, (and potentially a lot of taxpayers' money) is at stake. Pfizer's "secret contracts" have raised much international criticism and our authorities in Australia must be more transparent on future deals with such companies.

Pfizer formalized 73 deals for its coronavirus vaccine. According to Transparency International, a London-based advocacy group, only five contracts have been formally published by governments, and these with "significant redactions."

"Hiding contracts from public view or publishing documents filled with redacted text means we don't know...what happens if things go wrong and the level of financial risk buyers are absorbing," said [REDACTED]

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/19/secret-vaccine-contracts-with-governments-pfizer-took-hard-line-push-profit-report-says/>

<https://www.citizen.org/article/pfizers-power/>