

COVID-19 Response Inquiry

Name: Leonie Blackwell

Occupation: Naturopath

I am a small business owner in country Victoria. I work to improve people of all ages physical, mental, and emotional health using natural remedies and techniques. Prior to setting up my business 30 years ago I worked as a youth worker with homeless youth and in a secondary school as a humanities teacher.

Scope of the inquiry and my response to each point:

- 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.

I don't believe Australia should have been divided by States and Premier's allowed to have so much power. Australia is one country. We are not the United States of Australia where states have more power than the federal government. The federal government abdicated its responsibilities when it formed the National Cabinet in March 2020. It should be dissolved immediately. Our constitution clearly states the powers and responsibilities of federal and state governments. We need to follow our constitution.

- 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).

State and Federal Governments failed the people in their response to COVID-19. The predications were out of proportion and even when it was becoming clear that COVID-19 was not the threat it had been dramatized into governments went harder instead of backing off and adjusting in a reasonable and just manner. Perfectly safe medicines were banned. Science on masks were ignored. Rules made no sense – you could spread COVID if walking around but not if sitting. The fear mongering via the media was disgraceful. The division and hostility that was delivered through public health messaging was unAustralian. It has all been shown to have been unnecessary. The mental health crisis we are now facing with young people is a direct result of poor management of the COVID response. The science clearly showed the importance of zinc and vitamin D but that was not recommended here in Australia. In fact, lockdowns that limited time outside denied people the very medicine they needed most – sunshine.

- 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).

Australia should never lock its healthy citizens in their homes again. The increase in suicide is a burden government have created. Telehealth appointments have proven that doctors need to see their patients not just talk to them on the phone. Far too many diseases and illnesses have been missed due to inappropriate health care. As a naturopath we are required to visually see clients because many symptoms are detected that may not be described by a client. This clearly applies to medical doctors as well. Isolation and loneliness are the two biggest psychological killers for the elderly and the lockdowns only compounded it.

- International policies to support Australians at home and abroad (including with regard to international border closures and securing vaccine supply deals with international partners for domestic use in Australia).

The new vaccines were not properly tested, and the government continues to ignore the huge number of people who have been vaccine injured. Vaccination should never be mandated. We must have control over what we put in our bodies. It is appalling the way Prof ██████████ has been treated. We should prioritise Australian science, research, and production of vaccines first. ██████████ went to Iran to conduct his research and while the Iranians could access his vaccine that was safer than those available in Australia we could not. This is wrong on every front. The amount of money wasted on feeding the pockets of big pharma – overseas companies is disappointing. Transparency should be the recommendation of the inquiry and the people of Australia should know what was agreed to with all foreign agencies including vaccine makers, WHO, WEF, and United Nations.

- Support for industry and businesses (for example responding to supply chain and transport issues, addressing labour shortages, and support for specific industries).

End mandates and labour shortages will become less of a problem. The people I know who lost their jobs due to refusing to be vaccinated with an experimental drug have not returned to their previous jobs due to their disappointment at being fired. This includes teachers and nurses. People are angry. They haven't forgotten how they were treated and made to feel. This needs to be addressed.

- Financial support for individuals (including income support payments).

This should explore the number of businesses that closed during the two years of lockdowns in Victoria and across the country. Many businesses did not get financial support. There were hidden rules and limitations that the general public never heard of. People generally assumed businesses were doing fine. They were not. Many business owners committed suicide, and this was never discussed. The most ridiculous action was increasing unemployment benefits and aged pensions to help them with the financial impact of lockdowns when their lives were not altered.

- Community supports (across early childhood education and care, higher education, housing and homelessness measures, family and domestic violence measures in areas of Commonwealth Government responsibility).

The impact of lockdowns on domestic violence was appalling. Governments really should be ashamed of themselves for what they have done to the people. The cost-of-living crisis we are currently in is directly due to the mismanagement of the economy. You can't print money and stop people working and expect the economy to function in the following years. We can't afford to have the same response if not a stricter one in the future. Children were not at risk from COVID and they should have been able to continue at school. The gaps in learning for children of all ages has been unnecessary but devastating to the children themselves and their families. It has proven that unqualified people cannot teach. I still have families struggling to get their teenagers to school consistently. As well as teenagers struggling with school, hating school, because they lost two years of education and now feel 'dumb'. The schools haven't got the resources to catch these kids up and so they are just moving them through the system.

- Mechanisms to better target future responses to the needs of particular populations (including across genders, age groups, socio-economic status, geographic location, people with disability, First Nations peoples and communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities).

Future responses should focus on those at risk and let the rest of society live and work. This keeps the economy going and it allows healthy people to thrive. Every year there are thousands of people who die from the flu and pneumonia. We don't lockdown society because of it. We should never have been locked down with COVID and mandates should never be implemented again. Sweden is a good example of how to do this.

In conclusion, I am concerned that this inquiry is only examining the aspects of the COVID-19 response that will not address the hurt and rage that still lives in the people deeply impacted by the state and federal governments decisions. In a time when governments harp on about healing, reconciliation, and moving forward, they need to consider that COVID-19 has created and continues to create a divide in Australia that should concern all those who govern this fabulous nation.

For this reason I would call on the inquiry to recommend a proper Royal Commission be called to investigate the following: corrupt vaccine procurement and secret contracts with vaccine manufacturers, mask mandates, lockdowns, vaccine mandates, official misinformation and lies in the media regarding the ability of vaccines to block transmission, vaccine injuries, media including social media censorship, silencing of doctors, the role of AHPRA and ATAGI in censorship, oppression, and deregistering of doctors, and the poor treatment of the victims of the governments pandemic response.