

Submission to the COVID-19 Response Inquiry

To the Members of the Independent Panel,

I am very seriously disappointed with the Government's decision to establish this Inquiry rather than a royal commission which would have the necessary power and authority to obtain the truth and been appropriate given the extremely high cost to the Nation.

Further, I am very seriously disappointed with the Government's decision to exclude actions taken unilaterally by state and territory governments. Their actions divided Australia and they heavy-handedly trampled on citizen's rights. It was not too much to expect them to be able to agree a standard suite of protections to protect their citizens that did not include divisive border closures and other harsh measures. The aggressive police involvement bordered on a totalitarian action, a National shame.

I urge the Inquiry to strongly recommend that the terms of reference be extended to include actions taken unilaterally by state and territory governments and to identify ways in which, a unified national response to a global health emergency might be legislated, rather than leave Australia open to another free-for-all independent, state/territory response. The current legislation facilitated a corrosive politically campaign by the predominately Labor states/territories against the Liberal/NP Federal Government.

It appeared that the chief health officers in each jurisdiction had too much influence on decisions and the public. My suggestion would be to keep them away from the public and weigh their advice against the communities overall need to: protect the vulnerable, educate children, restrain public expenditure, provide access to vital health care, promote individual health, etc. The sole spokesperson should have been the Prime Minister, Premier or Chief Minister, not the daily scaremongering circus that reappeared every day: even when COVID-19 number were minimal. Nowhere did any authority put the death toll into perspective. From the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website, in 2021, there were approximately 171,469 deaths in Australia (89,401 males; 82,068 females). In 2021, there were 1,122 deaths due to COVID-19 registered in Australia. It seems that deaths due to COVID-19 figures are not available for 2022. Whilst death should be prevented where possible, the cost to the community must be kept in balance. As of November 2022 it is estimated that the vast majority of the Australian population, upward of eight out of 10 people, have had COVID, it might be argued that the existing COVID death toll is the death toll we were going to have expect for maybe an increase due to some swamping of medical facilities.

I am pleased that the Inquiry will consider the findings of previous relevant inquiries and reviews and identify knowledge gaps for further investigation. It will also consider the global experience and lessons learnt from other countries in order to improve response measures in the event of future global pandemics. In particular my expectation is that Sweden's response will be studied and considered very seriously as an alternative model for any future unfortunate global health emergencies.

In conclusion, by not establishing a royal commission, I believe that the Labor Government has chosen to trivialise and play politics with something that has had a profound long-term, negative impact on every aspect of Australia and its population. Nothing short of an inclusive royal commission will satisfy me.

Anyhow, let us hope this inquiry, extended as suggested, delivers some future benefits to the tax payer.