

Submission to COVID-19 Response Inquiry (September 2023)

I thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity to contribute this Inquiry. This is a personal response based on the experiences of my immediate family. I live in [REDACTED] [REDACTED], and I am the father [REDACTED]

At the start of the epidemic, my children were all in school, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

This submission relates to broader health supports for people impacted by COVID-19 and/or lockdowns, in particular, children.

I was and remain very supportive of government's response to the epidemic. Federal and state governments worked effectively to distribute vaccines, provide testing and ensure that life went on. The NBN was built just in time for remote working.

While some government actions took longer than I would have wanted, that is all with the benefit of hindsight. Government at all levels worked diligently to minimise the impacts of the epidemic with the information available at the time, and changed track as information changed.

Having said this, the impact of the lockdowns on my children's mental health was appalling.

My wife and I had the good fortune to remain in full-time employment throughout the epidemic, but this meant that our children were entirely reliant on remote learning.

All my children suffered significant loss in educational motivation.

[REDACTED]
– but as fulltime workers, after a while we just ran out of ideas and enthusiasm.

The loss of social engagement for my children was the single biggest impact. Their social skills went on hold for three years. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

And we are the lucky ones – we had the income for additional mental health support, and room for each child to have their own space.

The next time there is an epidemic like COVID-19, where the impact on children is so small, I urge the government to adopt policies that support keeping children in schools and universities. Without regular contact with friends and teachers, my experience was that it does not take long for mental health issues to rise up, which take years to recover from.