

Submission to the Australian Federal Government's COVID-19 Response Inquiry Panel

My name is [REDACTED] I am a [REDACTED] engineer by profession, born in [REDACTED] and having lived here my whole life.

As an Australian citizen deeply affected by the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, I present this submission to the Inquiry Panel. This submission reflects my personal experiences, observations, and a critical evaluation of the nation's pandemic response, with an emphasis on the need for improvement in future crises.

Critique of the Australian COVID-19 Response

The Australian response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which I characterise as a hysterical overreaction marked by extreme tunnel vision, has inflicted profound and lasting collateral damage on our society.

This damage includes, but is not limited to, excess non-COVID deaths, reduced life expectancy, and diminished Quality-Adjusted Life Years across the population. The impact extended beyond physical health, inflicting severe mental health issues, economic hardships, and societal damage, potentially leading to increased crime rates and social unrest.

The decision-making process, shrouded in secrecy and lacking public scrutiny, led to decisions that were at best panic responses and at worst, implemented with an underlying agenda that benefitted a privileged few.

This response, including lockdowns, travel restrictions, and economic measures, failed to balance the immediate health concerns with long-term societal, mental health, and economic impacts.

Lockdowns: A Misguided and Disproportionate Strategy

The lockdowns in Australia, while intended to control the spread of the virus, caused more harm than good. Instead, they created a socio-economic time bomb. The cost-benefit analysis of these lockdown measures was grossly inadequate. The toll on mental health, small businesses, and the broader economy was colossal and disproportionate to the benefits. The assumption that lockdowns were the only viable solution until a vaccine was developed was fundamentally flawed.

They led to a range of negative outcomes, including mental health crises, economic downturns, and exacerbated societal issues. These measures disproportionately affected younger generations and small business owners, leading to what I describe as intergenerational grand theft.

Personal Narrative

As someone who turned [REDACTED] at the onset of COVID-19, the lockdowns severely impacted my life. Living alone, these measures exacerbated feelings of loneliness and isolation, significantly affecting my well-being and ability to recover my quality of life. This struggle is not unique to me but is shared by many Australians.

My [REDACTED]-year-old grandmother [REDACTED], who has been living in a nursing home, is a poignant example. The strict isolation measures deprived her of visits from family during her critical twilight years. Despite the rigorous COVID-19 control measures, she contracted COVID-19 twice, underscoring the limited effectiveness of such measures.

Financial Ramifications and Intergenerational Inequity

The response has plunged our government into significant debt, burdening the working-age population and future generations. This debt, coupled with the economic fallout, jeopardises our nation's ability to sustain essential services like health and social security. Moreover, the policy disproportionately affected younger generations, leading to a stark increase in wealth disparity and brewing socio-economic tensions that could escalate into civil unrest.

Transparency and Public Scrutiny in Government Decisions

A glaring issue in the management of the pandemic was the lack of transparency and public scrutiny in governmental decisions. Predictions and models that influenced lockdown measures, such as those by Deputy Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly, were later proven to be significantly off-mark. This raises questions about the data and assumptions used to justify such draconian measures. Going forward, it is imperative that any pandemic response is grounded in transparent, publicly scrutinised data to prevent misguided policies.

The Need for Balanced Decision-Making

The submission argues that the decision-making process during the pandemic was often one-dimensional, focusing narrowly on COVID-19 fatalities while neglecting the broader spectrum of societal and individual well-being. This approach led to policies that were, in many cases, disproportionate to the actual threat posed by the virus, as evidenced by the vastly overestimated initial death toll predictions.

Travel Restrictions and Quarantine Measures

The Federal Government's travel bans, which restricted Australians from returning home, breached a fundamental right of citizenship. A more effective approach would have involved establishing dedicated quarantine facilities outside urban centres, respecting citizens' rights while protecting public health.

Reflections on the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy

The government's excessive reliance on vaccination as the sole solution to the pandemic was misguided. My personal experience with the Pfizer mRNA vaccine, despite being in a low-risk category, was influenced by the desire to protect vulnerable family members and regain social freedom. However, the vaccine's efficacy and the government's communication surrounding it contributed to public mistrust.

Economic Consequences of the Pandemic Response

The economic policies implemented by the Reserve Bank of Australia, such as quantitative easing and the Term Funding Facility, fuelled inflation and increased wealth disparity, adversely impacting ordinary Australians and benefiting banks, big businesses and real estate investors.

Recommendations for Future Pandemic Responses

1. **Comprehensive Impact Assessment:** Future pandemic responses must include a thorough assessment of potential collateral damage across health, society, and economy.
2. **Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure transparency and public scrutiny in decision-making and pandemic response strategies.
3. **Balanced Approach to Public Health Measures:** Develop and implement public health strategies that balance immediate health concerns with long-term societal and economic impacts.
4. **Improving Communication and Trust:** Commit to honest, clear, and consistent communication to rebuild public trust in health authorities and government.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic response in Australia, while well-intentioned, was flawed in execution and impact. It is crucial that we learn from these experiences to ensure that future responses are more balanced, transparent, and considerate of the diverse needs of our society.

