

I am a mother of 3 young children living in Brisbane, and I would like to bring attention to how the Australian covid response has negatively affected children like mine and others in the community.

Firstly, the most traumatic experience for our family was when our almost 2 year old (she ended up spending her second birthday in hospital) had [REDACTED]. Our older children had also had [REDACTED] before but they didn't need any medical assistance beyond the GP. So I called our usual GP and they said the whole covid spiel of if she has a cough, or sore throat, or runny nose or headache, we can't see her but they offered her a telehealth appointment. [REDACTED] is very obvious – that awful barking cough and the doctor could hear it over the phone but she said there was nothing she could do because she had at least one of the symptoms listed above. Based on our previous experiences where our kids quickly recovered, I hung up thinking it would be fine. Just a few hours later, she was barely able to breathe and for the first time in my life I called an ambulance. Thankfully, from there we were able to get her to the children's hospital and they were able to help her breathe again. However, they said it was the worst case of [REDACTED] they'd seen in a long time. I said I had tried to go to the doctor but they wouldn't see her. They said their emergency department were full of children GPs had refused to see. I never thought there would ever be a time when doctors would refuse to see sick people. This is not only wrong as that is what GPs are meant to do – as they had always done through terrible flu seasons year after year – but it just clogged up the hospitals with more simple cases that should have been seen by GPs. The whole reason the states shut down to each other was for the sake of hospitals apparently, yet this was negated by filling them with these cases.

Secondly, there has been a significant affect on children's schooling and while I have no evidence on a large scale, I know my 2 year old [REDACTED] has personally felt this. I hope this inquiry will look more into this. Children had a low risk of having complications from covid and shutting down schools should not ever be a strategy by the government. In line with this, our youngest who was 2 year old and not in school was negatively affected by having no social interactions outside our little family. The early years of a child's life is pivotal, and they need social interactions with other people and when those interactions are only with people with masks over their faces – this does not help. She was 2 years old before her first time she was able to go to a playground. Not only socially, but physically – she wasn't exposed to the germs to help build her immune system.

Lastly, we had close friends who had their [REDACTED] screenings cancelled. This is another issue this inquiry needs to address. One of them had [REDACTED], along with other symptoms affecting their [REDACTED] and their [REDACTED] was cancelled because the state government deemed it as non-essential. When she finally could get it done, she did have [REDACTED]. Having completed a Masters of Public Health, we learnt how important it was when addressing a health issue not to neglect or negatively affect other health issues. I never would have thought we would be in a situation where one virus caused all public health to go out the window. Cancer and other chronic health conditions were completely ignored and children were unable to be treated by doctors. I understand that covid was looking dangerous from overseas statistics, however one virus should never trump all other health issues. It was also rather quickly discovered that covid complications were associated with age and co-morbidities. So young children were put at risk and been affected for what

will be years to come. And all the effects of ignoring all other health issues will also be felt for some time.