

Submission to Covid 19 response inquiry

I would like to offer my perspective on the Australian response to Covid 19, in particular the effects of the vaccine mandates on those who chose not to be vaccinated. I hope that the inquiry recognises the deeply destructive impact such actions had within the community in order that they never be allowed to happen again.

Background

In late 2021 (verbally) and then in early 2022 (formally), I was threatened with the termination of my employment for failing to comply with my employer's vaccination policy. This policy mandated that I receive two injections of an approved Covid 19 vaccine, and supply evidence to my employer that they had been administered.

During this period, I watched as several colleagues and industry contacts resigned under the expectation of being sacked. I was also aware that many others throughout Australia and internationally were sacked for their non-compliance.

As a consequence of this threat, my family and I decided to sell our house and move, at significant financial and mental cost. During this period, I became isolated from friends and family members. To date, some of these relationships have not recovered.

Because of the power of public messaging broadcast by the alliance of government, media and industry, many of my family and friends were unwilling to listen to my explanation for choosing not to be vaccinated. This was in spite of the fact that several people we knew suffered significant vaccine injuries, and there was emerging evidence that the vaccines were neither safe nor effective:

1. The vaccines did not prevent transmission (Singanayagam et al. 2021)
2. The vaccines did not prevent serious illness (Giris, 2022)
3. The vaccines could be harmful (Daniel, 2021; Nordstrom et al. 2021)
4. The risk of severe illness or death from the disease given my age and high level of physical fitness was vanishingly small (NSW Health, 2020; Dept. Health, 2022)

Based on my own review of available information, I made the informed decision not to be vaccinated. I accepted the risk to me personally but judged that the vaccine posed a greater risk to me and my family than Covid did. This conclusion has been borne out in the intervening two years.

Issues with Federal Government Response

Although the federal government was not directly responsible for my employer's vaccination policy, it must acknowledge it contributed to the circumstances in which mandates were made possible. This shared responsibility begins with the actions of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) who gave provisional approval for the vaccines despite the lack of long-term safety data. In the wake of this decision, politicians, the media and employers all claimed the vaccines were "safe and effective".

Secondly, the federal government ordered over 250 million doses of the various vaccines (Lowry, 2022), enough for 10 doses per person. This suggests that perhaps the government knew the vaccines did not prevent infection or transmission and may explain why governments were so insistent people took them.

Thirdly, the states and territories only began mandating the vaccination of workers after the federal government introduced mandates for aged care workers, indicating these jurisdictions were either operating in concert with, or were emboldened by the actions of the federal government.

Fourthly, the federal government was silent when it came to protecting the legal rights of its citizens:

1. It did nothing to highlight the illegality of mandating medical treatment as established under Section 51 (xxiiiA) of The Constitution
2. It did nothing to communicate Privacy Principle 3 of the federal Privacy Act (1988), which establishes that consent must be freely given and constitute valid consent in order for an employer to collect evidence of vaccination.
3. It did nothing to protect my rights, and those of countless others, under the federal Biosecurity Act (2015), which states that an individual cannot be forced into vaccination in the absence of a Biosecurity Control Order
4. It did nothing to uphold Article 1 of the Nuremberg Code (1947), to which it is signatory. This states that voluntary consent is absolutely essential, that coercion is prohibited, and medical treatments are to be received only when the subject is in possession of all the available relevant information.
5. It did nothing to uphold Article 6 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005) to which it is signatory. This states that any medical intervention is only to be carried out with the prior, free and informed consent of the person concerned, based on adequate information.
6. It did nothing to uphold Section 2.1.3 of the Immunisation Handbook (Commonwealth Department of Health, 2021), which states that for consent to be legally valid, it must be given voluntarily in the absence of undue pressure, coercion or manipulation.

Finally, opposing perspectives were shut down in order that public perception could be controlled, and panic sustained. In this environment, mandatory vaccination became the only acceptable solution in the minds of many.

The benefits to the community of the government's actions during the pandemic are questionable, but the consequences for many are clear: broken relationships, ill health, financial hardship, and total mistrust of government and institutions. These impacts were avoidable and can be avoided in the future provided the government is honest about its failings and recommits to upholding basic human rights.

Future pandemic response

Actions I believe the government should make to avoid similar outcomes from future pandemics include:

1. Provide space for mature public discussion regarding the pros and cons of all proposed pandemic response measures. Let scientific evidence guide discussion, not politics. Controlling the public discussion by shutting down dissent does not instil trust, and risks momentum building around politically driven narratives.
2. Support the rights of individuals to make their own health choices.
3. Promote the uncontroversial notion that improving one's health through diet and exercise provides the best protection against severe illness in any form.
4. Uphold existing laws and international agreements that seek to protect the rights of Australian citizens, especially the right to make personal medical choices, and to free and informed consent.
5. Avoid the temptation to allow health directives to be issued from the top down. Public health initiatives should not be allowed to interfere with individual medical choices. This is particularly pertinent given the WHO's proposed amendments to the international pandemic treaty which has the potential to be used as a vehicle for imposing population level medical treatment, overriding individual rights.

Lastly, I would like to see an independent investigation into excess mortality arising in Australia (and seen across the western world) since 2021. To properly determine the cause/s of excess mortality, this investigation must not be constrained by narrow terms of reference.

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