

To the Covid Inquiry Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on Australia's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am writing as a concerned citizen, a parent of two primary school children with elderly parents. To be honest, I have reservations about the value of submitting this given the lack of action on the Long Covid inquiry and the government's tendency to downplay the effects of COVID.

To begin, rebuilding public trust is essential. Transparent, consistent, and empathetic communication is crucial in providing accurate information to the public. By fostering trust through open and honest communication, the government can establish credibility and reliability, which are vital for a successful pandemic response. Addressing misconceptions and promoting a realistic understanding of the risks associated with infectious diseases is paramount. It is important to clearly communicate the potential harm and danger posed by novel variants and dispel any misconceptions about the benefits of infection. Emphasizing the importance of preventative measures will help protect public health.

My requests for the ongoing management of Covid and future pandemics are as follows:

- An urgent shift towards a **more sensible "Living with COVID"** approach to reduce disability, sickness, and death.
- **Improved public health advice** that addresses the **airborne** transmission route, with consistency between the States.
- **Ensuring safety of all patients in healthcare settings** (masks, isolation)
- Protecting children through improved **ventilation in schools and access to vaccination.**
- Responsible media reporting plays a crucial role in shaping public perception.
- Collaborative efforts between the government, public health experts, and media organizations can establish guidelines for **responsible reporting, reducing misinformation and promoting public understanding.**
- **Community engagement and grassroots movements:** Governments should actively foster partnerships with community organizations, healthcare providers, and influential individuals to effectively disseminate accurate information, promote behaviour change, and address the unique needs of diverse communities.

My family of four experienced Covid infections in mid-2022 despite taking all available precautions except homeschooling. The virus was brought home by my eldest daughter from an unventilated classroom. My husband suffered from cardiac and other symptoms, including tinnitus, for months. My youngest daughter possibly developed PANS/PANDAS, exhibiting sudden onset OCD signs.

Regrettably, we have seen many cases of debilitating Long Covid and other complications, including two young healthy friends having heart attacks a couple of months after COVID infections. Personally, my friends and I have noticed higher resting heart rates since two months after our "mild" Covid infections – very concerning. Not become a cold or flu like the Western Australian Chief Health Officer seemed to say today at a health consumer forum.

Sadly, I have lost trust in the government's commitment to our long-term well-being. It has become evident that short-term economic considerations and political aspirations take precedence over public health. For example, the decision not to offer vaccinations to children under 5 seems misguided, as the risks are low and many parents would willingly assume them. It appears to be an attempt to expedite the spread of Covid throughout the population in order to prematurely return to normality.

The notion that "people are tired of Covid precautions" seems manufactured by the government. The overwhelming support for the cautious McGowan government in West Australia's recent elections suggests that people value their health and well-being. In retrospect, the vaccine mandates appear to be preparing us for a half-hearted "vaccination-only" approach.

Considerable funds were allocated to ventilation assessments and HEPA purifiers, but little attention was given to ensuring that the recommendations were followed and the equipment properly used and maintained.

I question why my children are not eligible for vaccine boosters and why schools send home letters about head lice but not about BSL3 pathogens. The lack of public health information has resulted in dismissal and ridicule from family, friends, colleagues, and even healthcare professionals, which is disheartening.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Sincerely,  
Claire Hick