

Australia's Covid response and implications for another Pandemic

Our start was slow but promising, given we began to act the minute cases were detected here. We were dealing with an unknown enemy at first. We didn't really know what to do, so we made sensible plans. For the first time ever, nerds were heroes and we listened to scientists. Everyone began masking, washing their shopping and trying to socially distance when out and about. Things became worse and as more people died overseas, we needed more protections. We had lockdowns and contact tracing via QR codes. Everyone tuned in every day for the acknowledgement of deaths and Premiers and Chief Ministers stood up on TV to take questions accompanied by Health Ministers. We were following the science and so remote work and remote learning became a thing. For the first time since or kid was a [REDACTED] I felt that people experienced and understood what being a seriously sick person might involve. I think that I was mistaken.

The minute RATS were developed, and vaccinations began there was a move to re-open the economy, because The Economy, you know. Businesses needed customers and offices in big cities were standing empty. Thus, the great re-opening began. Schools, businesses and workplaces all began to demand their workers back to the office. The gains made by isolating were tossed into the dustbin and were not well thought through.

We forgot about the vulnerable and the aged. Sure we had vaccines and efforts were made to vaccinate the Aged Care population, but we didn't really think about those who lived at home, but might have mobility issues or no transport. We temporarily thought about people who needed to use public transport but were vulnerable. But as the cooks started to organise and rear their [REDACTED] head it was easier to bow to them and stop insisting on masks in all public places. Some places where vulnerable people congregate kept masks, but slowly over time the masks were downgraded and infection control became less of a priority, because we have Anti-Virals, dontcha know.

So where are we now?

We have no **contact tracing** and thus no real idea of numbers. We've also moved to stop informing the public about the statistics. Sure the statistics have become unreliable due to self-reporting, but if covert sewerage testing is continuing the public deserve to know what that is saying because we have decided to make vulnerable people responsible for their own safety and yet we have taken away the tools with which to do it.

Pandemic leave, was a genius idea. I know from my experience as a Carer, that people will very soon burn through their sick leave if they have to take it for themselves, their children and their spouses. We should have kept pandemic leave in place We should NOT have automatically paid it out to big businesses without the proviso that they would need to repay it, should their books remain in the black, rather than go into the red as anticipated. Mutual Obligations anyone????

Remote learning through local schools has been reduced to children being able to access the online materials, but not have contact with teachers and classmates in my jurisdiction. Who would need this? The most vulnerable students, that's who – you know the cf kids, the cancer kids etc. We reduced services to them back to pre-pandemic conditions. Hardly an example of understanding inclusive education. [REDACTED] might be able to provide more information and indicate whether they have had more enquiries since schools have returned to in person learning, rather than just being a service for essential workers.

How are state and territory Health and Education departments working with schools and childcare providers around vaccination programs to ensure all are vaccinated?

Hospitals provided care for affected individuals and served our communities well. Unfortunately we seem to have driven some of them out of their jobs through Long Covid, or burnout. Introduction of Tele/Video health was an excellent innovation and should remain. We no longer wish to take our person to the variety of Specialists they see, because Covid protections have been eroded and are now **places of risk, rather than places of safety**. I don't want covid infection to be a suck it and see for our family, given our person has vulnerabilities. **Hospitals and Aged Care alongside GP surgeries all need to be places of covid safety for all who need to use them. If staff don't want to take proper infection control precautions against a novel virus, they should be working in a different field.**

Vaccinations had been held out as a hope to get us back to normal. In reality the virus is mutating so fast that it's cleverness outstrips our capability to control it at present. Even having just had an [REDACTED] vaccine this week, I know that JN1 is on the way and some time next year I'll need another. The [REDACTED] gets a new vaccination every time one is offered, but I wonder how long until they are no longer eligible? Will it be before there is a sterilising vaccine? Even though they have [REDACTED]. Also what about the under 5's, when can they get vaccinated? And now it appears the rate of vaccination for other illnesses is falling – how do we plan to remediate this?

Since opening up our **Communications** have become woeful. We are not communicating to people the new knowledge around covid being airborne, the need for N95 masks to be worn and worn properly, not half hanging off the face, or under the chin. How many people know about the layered approach to protections, so that if one layer fails, we have other layers to help compensate.

A recent retrospective article about how well those infected with SARS-1 have fared, seems to indicate that they are not doing that well. We have not taken heed of historians who warned us that the 1918 flu caused unforeseen medical events and we have acted too soon to minimise what might be the **long term outcome** of infection on the human body. As someone wise on X commented recently – we are only just coming up to a point where we can see the 5-year survival rate of Covid.

Moreover, it appears that we are underfunding or closing **Long Covid clinics**. How then are we going to gather the data and make the lives of sufferers better? It seems both pathetic and unwise to do so, particularly at this point.

Very sadly we don't have a **harmonised message** across the country, each Health Ministry appears to be doing their own thing, which unless some randomised controlled trial, seems nonsensical to me. It appears that we have a **You do You** approach to public health, and everyone listens to the expert of their preference. Even the once respected ABC, a potentially powerful communication medium, through all their platforms, has unfortunately provided a forum for some Covid minimisers, rather than insist on providing truthful, solid information for the public. **MSM and Social Media should have been harnessed more effectively as per the AIDS campaign.**

So how if my family doing? We've had one covid infection brought home from a workplace contact. WE were able to contain the infection by isolating the affected person, running HEPA Filters, masking them if they had to use the bathroom. Keeping a separate bathroom for ourselves. Masking near their room, blocking up the space under their door, opening our windows and providing RATS and they could not return to family life until they were testing negative. **None of this advice came from government.** It came from advice found on X and from ABC Coronacast. **A very sad indictment considering all the money spent.**

We continue to live in semi-isolation, aware that the Albanese government has not, as promised in Opposition, doing better than the Coalition re covid. We have Minimisers continually being

platformed and misinformation being promulgated in the Community. Foolish stuff like wash your hands which is useless for an airborne virus. Unless this is dealt with, and we accept **#Covid is not over. We can forget planning for the next Pandemic.**