I am a young adult, only in my mid-20's. I love reading books, rollerblading, sewing, embroidery, rock climbing, cooking, spending time with my friends, and going to the gym. I love working at my job. I love the life that I have created for myself. I am currently in the prime of my life, healthier than I ever will be, and due to the actions of the Australian Government, **I cannot take advantage of that.**

For the years during the Australian Government's active response to Covid (approx 2020-2022), Covid has been proven to be a disease that affects multiple organs and cause long-term health problems, not to mention the cumulative effects of re-infection.

Catching Covid could be devastating to me, even without having any pre-existing conditions. Catching Covid could leave me unable to work, unable to continue my hobbies, unable to spend time with the people I love due to the risk of infection from the community. Catching Covid could **leave me unable to support myself.**

Most of my life I have been a child, spending it in education, beholden to the whims of the adults in my life, unable to experience true freedom.

I do not have the luxury of a life already lived.

The personal impact of the decisions made by National Cabinet has been isolating. While scientists were publishing studies on the worrying cumulative effects of re-infection, the long-term outcomes of being infected with Covid, and the impacts of Covid in children, National Cabinet was scrapping mandatory isolation.

People like me, who were reading these studies, could only watch on in horror as Covid protections & mitigations were slowly stripped away, from reducing, then later scrapping, mandatory isolation periods, removing Pandemic Disaster payments, then later, state government's removing the requirement to report positive Rapid Antigen Tests.

My suggestion going forward is that Governments and their advisors should **keep a closer eye on developing science**, especially around novel pathogens like SARS-COV-2, and do not dismiss opportunities like what Australia had to see the effects of years of unmitigated spread in other countries like the UK, the USA, and Sweden. Australia should be more cautious and proactive, and show more leadership and confidence.

The Federal Health department could improve Public Health messaging by being **more consistent and up-to-date**, and giving Australians the confidence that they have all the facts. Currently, there is a theme of "vax and relax" amongst current Public Health messaging. Very little people know about how Covid harms the body, how it is **airborne** (and what that actually means), and how even mild infections lead to long-term health complications. Even less know that **respirators are much better at protecting people than surgical masks**. [This recent post by the Victorian Department of Health is an excellent example of good messaging.](#) Improving Public Health messaging in this way will allow all Australians to **give themselves the best opportunity to maintain their health**, instead of struggling when they suddenly have all these new health issues. This will also assist GPs in taking care of patients who develop complications common with Covid, as doctor and patient will share common knowledge. This updated messaging will also encourage them to continue to take precautions when dealing with the public in their clinics.

There is currently a massive surge in Covid cases happening during this Christmas period, and **no GP clinics near me are implementing their own masking requirements**, and I live in a major city. People usually go to the doctor when they are sick, and with more and more people getting sick, there is a larger chance of me catching Covid at my doctors. **I shouldn't have to risk catching Covid at a routine check-up needed to monitor my health.**

The impact of the removal of isolation income support was devastating to the spread of Covid. With the cost of living crisis forever risking, **people are increasingly having to choose between going to work sick, and loss of income**. Someone I know recently Covid a few weeks ago, and because they had no sick leave, they had to go into work and infect everyone they worked with. This of course would start a chain reaction as they infect people, who go on to infect others and disrupt their lives. This was unfortunately also accompanied by a laissez-faire attitude, this person didn't see the point of protecting their colleagues and others from their infection as they believe that a Covid infection is no big deal, due to the lack of public health messaging informing people of the harm that Covid does to the body. **If Pandemic Leave was still instated, this person may have stayed home and protected their colleagues from sickness.**

Vulnerable Australians and those who do not wish to catch Covid have faced challenges such as loneliness, isolation, and ridicule from our peers. We are called hermits, hypochondriacs, people with "Covid anxiety". We are gaslit into believing our concerns are unfounded, despite study after

study, article after article saying that Covid is something to be concerned about. I often mourn the periods of 2020 & 2021 -- we had mask mandates, financial supports, community. Now there is no community. No support from friends, from family, from workplaces, from the government. It is an incredibly lonely experience. I am incredibly lonely.

If there was better information shared, more effective public health messaging, stronger protections in health facilities and essential areas, my life would be easier to navigate. I wouldn't be afraid to go to the doctor for fear of catching Covid from my GP. I wouldn't have to worry about getting a bout of Covid along with a half-dozen eggs from the grocery store. I wouldn't have lost all my friends and loved ones who think I'm insane for not wanting to catch a disease that has [decreasing support available and reminds doctors of their time fighting the HIV epidemic](#).

In order to improve Australia's preparedness for (current and) future pandemics, in addition to stronger public health messaging as mentioned several times previously, we should also **heavily invest in [air ventilation](#) and [filtration](#)** and have legislation and monitors in place to ensure these are being used effectively, especially in schools, workplaces, and public spaces. This will not be the only airborne pandemic we will ever face. The **normalisation of mask-wearing (especially respirators)** should also be encouraged and **modelled in our leaders.** We should also **reinstate masks in healthcare,** as patients and workers should protect each other in order to maximise their health outcomes.

In 2020, I was on the cusp of freedom. I was moving out from my parent's house, landing the first job of my career, and beginning to experience the first milestones of adulthood. Yet I find myself once again beholden to the whims of those in my life who believe they know best, unable to experience true freedom. Except this time, there is no guaranteed end in sight, no obvious milestone that will signal the end of this. I can only do the best I can to keep myself safe. I only wish it were easier.