

I am a disabled writer and advocate who continues to take precautions during the ongoing pandemic. I am passionate about access and inclusion, particularly the use of plain language and Easy Read to deliver information in a way that is clear and easy to understand for the widest possible audience.

The concerns I wish to raise in this submission mostly relate to the reduction and ultimate removal of mandatory isolation periods, as well as public health messaging around the use of masks and the risks of single and repeated COVID infections.

The removal of mandatory isolation for those who test positive for COVID-19 on October 14 2022 was terrifying and dangerous for myself and many others. We are essentially housebound as this is the only way to keep ourselves safe. Removing mandatory isolation meant that people could – can – spread a virus whose long term impacts we are only just beginning to understand.

Wearing a mask – specifically an N95 mask – is one of the precautions I take whenever I leave my house or have visitors. However, due to a failure of public health messaging, most people no longer wear masks. Those who do often wear surgical masks which – though better than nothing – are not as effective. I am disappointed that the Department of Health website says nothing about the effectiveness of different types of masks. Masks are also not affordable for many people, particularly as the cost of living increases. While I am deeply grateful that some NDIS participants can claim the cost of masks and other PPE, the cost of masks are likely to be a deterrent for those who would otherwise wear one and prioritise their safety and that of others.

I would like to get my next COVID vaccine, but when I contacted several of the vaccine providers listed on the Australian Department of Health website, I was told they did not administer COVID vaccinations.

As a disabled person well aware of the risks of a single COVID infection (let alone repeated infections) much of the world has become unsafe and inaccessible for me. I hope that my submission and the broader results of this inquiry demonstrate that we can and should do more to educate people about and protect them from the ongoing COVID pandemic. Please feel free to contact me for further information.