

My submission is at the 11th hour, but I wanted to express some reflections.

I lived in South West Sydney during the pandemic and despite low case numbers in July 2021, the NSW state government decided to continue its zero covid strategy and impose lockdowns on all and outdoor mask mandates despite zero evidence of outdoor transmission. And the mandating of vaccines in most industries as a condition of employment.

Over the next few weeks, my relatively quiet area was characterised by police cars circling the area making sure people wore masks whilst helicopters circled the air on the look out for 'rule' breakers I presume. Myself and many others were not as concerned with the virus so much as the response to the virus: an over-reaction given the evidence that the vast vast majority of people infection will recover.

I am a lay person, so I defer to the great barrington declaration on what a sensible, measured covid response could have looked like. Focused protection of the most vulnerable while allowing herd immunity to build by the ones who are most likely to recover: <https://gbdeclaration.org/>

My experience was felt mostly as a result of state government 'unilateral' actions - disappointingly out of scope here. But as the federal government, you were responsible for championing the zero covid policy. And it was slavishly followed even despite the economic and social harm it caused.

Can we say never again to one sized fits all approaches that cause more harm than good? Can we accept that regardless of what we do, people can and do get sick? That zero virus is a fantasy? But can we also empower people to find the right ways to recover without resorting to mandates?

My wish is for common sense to prevail.

Thank you.