

Dear Committee members,

I am writing to urge a thorough and comprehensive review of the current mask and vaccine mandates, as well as an evaluation of the economic, social, and psychological impacts of lockdowns and curfews implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, I would like to draw your attention to concerns regarding the communication strategies employed, specifically the use of fear and the potential divisive impact on society.

**\*\*Mask and Vaccine Mandates:\*\***

The implementation of mask and vaccine mandates has undeniably impacted individual freedoms and social dynamics. To assess the necessity, effectiveness, and proportionality of these measures, I recommend considering the insights from a Cochrane Review conducted up to October 2022. This comprehensive review includes results from 78 Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and provides valuable perspectives on the efficacy and impact of various interventions during past pandemics, including H1N1, SARS, and COVID-19.

Furthermore, the Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS) system's Annual Report for 2021 highlights a significant increase in adverse events following COVID-19 vaccinations. With 10,726 individual reports in 2021 raising questions about the safety and risk-benefit ratio compared to other immunisations, a nuanced assessment is crucial for informed decision-making.

**\*\*Lockdowns and Curfews:\*\***

The economic, social, and psychological impacts of lockdowns and curfews are profound, necessitating a comprehensive evaluation of their long-term effects on Australian society. Early epidemiological studies, including Imperial College London's work, predicted large effects of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as lockdowns. However, a systematic review and meta-analysis examining 18,590 studies and categorising them into Lockdown Stringency Index, Shelter-in-Place Order, and Specific NPI groups collectively indicate little to no effect on COVID-19 mortality.

Given the potential weaknesses in study design and the emphasis on modelling over empirical evidence, this analysis prompts a reconsideration of lockdown policies as a pandemic response instrument.

**\*\*Communication Strategies:\*\***

Concerns regarding the unwarranted use of fear in public health messaging also warrant attention. The government report "COVID-19: Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions to Reduce Transmission" identifies an evidence gap, emphasizing the weak evidence base for certain NPIs and the need to strengthen evaluation in future pandemic preparedness.

Additionally, the communication approach's impact on mental health and the creation of an "us versus them" division between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals requires careful examination.

A holistic approach to reviewing and adjusting pandemic response measures is essential. The Cochrane Review, WAVSS Annual Report, meta-analysis on lockdowns, and insights into communication strategies collectively emphasize the need for a balanced and evidence-driven approach to navigating the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.

I want to express concerns regarding the composition and scope of the current inquiry into Australia's COVID-19 response. It is imperative that the inquiry is objective, impartial, and all-encompassing to ensure a thorough and transparent examination of the nation's pandemic measures.

**\*\*Panel Composition:\*\***

The appointment of panel members who have previously expressed support for certain pandemic measures raises questions about the objectivity and impartiality of the inquiry. For the sake of transparency, it is

recommended that panel members with prior endorsements of specific measures recuse themselves to maintain the integrity of the inquiry process.

**\*\*Exclusion of Unilateral State and Territory Government Decisions:\*\***

A critical omission in the inquiry's scope is the exclusion of actions taken unilaterally by state and territory governments. Decisions such as state-imposed lockdowns and border controls played a pivotal role in the nation's pandemic response and should be thoroughly examined as part of the inquiry's comprehensive review.

**\*\*The Need for a Comprehensive Review:\*\***

While the terms of reference for the inquiry are extensive, it is crucial to address the aforementioned concerns to ensure that everything runs smoothly. A truly comprehensive review should encompass all aspects of the government's response, including those currently outside the inquiry's scope, to provide a holistic understanding of the decisions made during the pandemic.

**\*\*Conclusion:\*\***

This submission represents a collective call for a more inclusive and thorough investigation into Australia's COVID-19 response. It underscores the importance of freedom and liberty, urging that fearmongering not compromise these fundamental values. We appeal to the inquiry to consider these recommendations to ensure transparency, accountability, and the preservation of Australian values and liberties.

Sincerely,

Jason Pascoe  
Man, Father, Husband, Son, Brother.