

## **Submission To The COVID-19 Response Inquiry**

I am a retired geophysicist & engineer resident in Queensland as a dual Australian/Canadian citizen. I was coerced by the Commonwealth Government to have a Covid-19 vaccination to visit family in Canada mid-2022. The previous two years I was prevented from leaving Australia to visit family in Canada.

The focus of my submission is on **Borders and a National Quarantine Plan**

Under Section 92 of the Constitution, trade, commerce and the movement of people among the states “shall be absolutely free”. The High Court has held there are exceptions to the rule, including defending the public’s health.

Commonwealth legislation can be passed under parliament’s quarantine or other powers in the Constitution to mandate a national quarantine plan with legally enforceable rules that can override state laws, including quarantine measures and border closures. The Commonwealth chose not to do this during the Covid-19 outbreak, leaving it to the states to make border closure decisions that were often subject to political rather than epidemiological drivers.

The Covid-19 outbreak was frequently marked by arbitrary border closures which were unnecessary from a public health perspective. In many cases there was no correlation between virus ‘hot spots’ and state borders which created unjustified economic disruption, waste of resources and damage to human relationships and health<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>.

### **Recommendation:**

#### **The Commonwealth should design an efficient fit-for-purpose National Quarantine Plan**

The Commonwealth should have led the Covid-19 response by establishing and managing a non-partisan national quarantine plan to be applied to specific areas identified as having infections above a certain level, often referred to as the ‘hot spot’ approach. The border of these ‘hot spots’ could be optimized within state borders or could straddle borders under a national plan thus minimizing resource requirements and mitigating impact on the community, states and country. State expertise could be seconded to help resource the national response during an emergency, including detailed public reporting of their operations. Cost sharing could be agreed between the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

The national quarantine plan should also address national borders. Australia became the only country in the world that prohibited its own citizens from both entering and leaving the country, restricting freedoms even more than former Soviet bloc countries, where their citizens could at least return home. There was no public health justification for barring people, including foreign citizens from leaving the country if they assumed the risk outside Australia including return transportation.

Pressure on state resources created inconsistencies and severe limits on international arrivals that should have been coordinated at a national level. The Commonwealth should include management and operation of international arrivals and hotel quarantine with specialized quarantine facilities under a national quarantine plan.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.4bc.com.au/tragic-news-mother-loses-twin-baby-after-being-denied-entry-to-queensland/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10089597/Annastacia-Palaszczuk-backflips-decision-force-boy-cerebral-palsy-hotel-quarantine.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://startsat60.com/media/news/politics/absolutely-disgusting-annastacia-palaszczuk-slammed-for-nrl-border-exemptions>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.9news.com.au/national/queensland-cho-says-film-star-afl-quarantine-exemptions-granted-on-basis-of-economic-benefits/8361546b-4f0a-4cdb-8886-c8d4bcd4b875>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/queensland-s-borders-to-stay-closed-until-90-per-cent-vaccination-rate/ar-AAOC145>