

Commonwealth Government Covid19 Response Inquiry

I write my submission as an engaged Australian under the handles of; parent, first responder (firefighter), scientist (physics and geomatics), junior sports coach, tutor (primary school). My most immediate responsibilities are raising my two primary school aged children and caring for my elderly parents, both in their 80's, who we are supporting in their home rather than burdening the aged care sector. Unfortunately I am most definitely not a writer so please bear with me.

Whilst I am a scientist, with decades of education and experience in my field, I will keep this response as a reflection of my personal experience, provision of peer reviewed research is better provided by experts in their fields. My reasoning is a key point in my submission, that being; many influential decision makers and public commentators have stepped well outside their areas of expertise, conveying their personal opinions (shaped by their fears and bias) as they have personally judged impacts of the pandemic or certain mitigations on subjects outside their expertise, rather than giving in-field, evidence based expert analysis and allowing other experts the capacity to analyse the impacts and potential mitigations as related to their own expertise. Virologists have commented on mental health or economic impacts, rather than staying discipline specific, Medical Doctors have commented on the cost effectiveness of upgrading HVAC with integrated HEPA and farUV, rather than leaving engineers to their job. I have a number of points to make and several will relate to multiple terms of reference which appear to have been kept deliberately vague, hopefully to allow easy understanding of a submission such as mine.

Governance through the ongoing covid19 pandemic, from a citizen's perspective, has been a hot mess. Firstly, the Federal Government appeared to have zero interest in providing health protections for Australians, reminiscent of the Black Summer Bushfire season and the disinterest expressed via 'I don't hold a hose', there appeared to be no federal leadership, a situation that has continued after the change of government. Luckily, the states stepped in and implemented control measures which worked well enough for a time, however lacked the capacity to deal with federal matters such as effective (coordinated) quarantine and the ongoing issue of procurement and timely delivery of suitable vaccines.

A point to note from the perspective of a physicist (with experience managing large facilities in a public setting including HVAC); hotel quarantine was never going to work. Even if the obviously delusional rhetoric of droplet transmission had been accurate, hotels were never going to prevent transmission within the facility.

Expanding on the topic of quarantine: Australia, a highly resourced island nation, has a strong history of quarantine, which was thrown out for the ongoing covid19 pandemic. The nation is pockmarked with ex-quarantine stations including entire suburbs. In the early 2000's I was an SES responder during which time I participated in exercises around events of chemical and biological threat. One scenario was a viral outbreak requiring layers of quarantine. It was made clear to us that the guidebook existed and could be adapted to the various forms of threat, scale and transmission vectors. It has therefore been infuriating to hear so many politicians and expert commentators state that there was no rulebook for the pandemic, particularly as pandemics were referenced in the mentioned exercises. SARS1 may even have been the trigger for the exercises.

I would like to place firmly on the record, my protest to

- The abandonment of the Precautionary Principle
- The lack of Evidence Based decision making and communication, particularly in abandoning protection measures
- The 'Personal Responsibility' policy, we had Public Health
- The abandonment of Australia's children to covid19 and misinformation

- The ongoing 'stroll-out' of vaccines, particularly the exclusion of children, the lack of timely provision and the high reliance on vaccines incapable of stopping infection
- Overlooking Long Covid, including the vascular nature of the illness, the damage to all human organs and immune damage.
- Get infected to gain immunity (insanity born of the 20th century chickenpox party?)

The initial Australian response to the ongoing covid19 pandemic was, thanks to the state governments, precautionary and highly communicative. Whilst it is clear some measures needed significant refinement, the priority was Australians' health preservation and all Australians working together. A lot of good came of this which was subsequently trashed as Australians heard experts, politicians and public figures express fear laden opinion. Expert claims were made of covid's mildness, the immunity of children, that covid transmission did not occur in schools, that masks cause mental health issues, that covid awareness was nothing but anxiety. These claims were made by highly influential experts, including members of this inquiry panel, yet were not evidence based. All these claims, should anyone have looked, proved contradictory to the weight of peer reviewed research, yet Australia's covid mitigations were torn up, our plans to manage covid thrown away with our public health system and the health of our children. All whilst paying no heed to the warnings of Long Covid, warnings of the looming burden on industry, the economy and our health system as people became more and more ill.

Any analysis of the covid19 response must identify that many core commentators and decision makers have demonstrated high levels of personal bias which has inarguably interfered with their recommendations and seemingly led to specialists such as Professor [REDACTED] and those from the Burnet Institute, such as Professor [REDACTED] being ignored.

Public policy settings and communications remove the individual's ability to follow the 'personal responsibility' policy. Our personal experience has been:

- Children have no access to effective vaccines.
- Australia's vaccine program is wildly out of step from comparable nations, we have always been behind and information is heavily guarded by authorities. The Vaccine Hunger Games?
- Schools deny autonomy. Covid aware school children are ostracised by teachers and classmates and activities aren't in any way covid safe.
- Workplaces, including government employ, refuse to accommodate respirators/masks, let alone HEPA filters
- Renters have no say on who enters their property; as renters aren't paying the bill, many estate agents and trades fight any requests to mask and to not enter homes when ill.
- People are now forced to make dangerous decisions;
 - either children attend school and contract a virus known to damage the immune system, damage the body's organs and cause cognitive dysfunction, or find a way to homeschool and accept isolation.
 - Dr/Dentist checkup with a dose of covid or, delay and potentially miss an important diagnosis.
- Many specialists have argued against the current settings, using evidence based communication.
- Australia's policies have ignored and contradicted evidence, particularly of the long term sequelae, as if Long Covid does not exist. That fact alone is evidence our settings are wrong, the only question is how dangerous, the ongoing toll is testimony that it is very dangerous.
- Hospital acquired infections are another key indicator that the settings are not designed to save people, in the short or long term.
- Due to the minimising message from government and influential experts and commentators, the public reaction to anyone showing covid19 awareness has been aggressive and exclusionary.

It is incredibly important to understand the real world consequences of public messaging. Whilst intellectual people might realise that a lot of very clear messaging was provided early in the pandemic response, messaging that spelt out the importance of minimising transmission, the cumulative damage of repeat infections etc, it was replaced with very clear messages that; you should get infected to gain immunity, that children were immune and that the pandemic was over. Schools in Victoria were provided clear instructions to maximise ventilation and HEPA filtration, however schools unilaterally decided that they didn't need to follow those rules as the TV had told individuals to get infected, that children were immune and that anyone taking precautions were suffering anxiety rather than looking at real risk and taking balanced mitigations such as wearing a respirator indoors. The choice has become, accept repeat infection and ever increasing risk of Long Covid, or be isolated from your world. Personal responsibility is not possible, instead we have a bully nation, force infecting citizens that simply want a good life, good health for their family, and to contribute positively.

Australia went from a best in world covid19 response, with near zero transmission and the ability to protect ourselves, to a nation with a vaccine only plan but without the vaccines. Whilst it is prudent to be conservative with unproven vaccines, we have a situation where children are ineligible and, depending on the stage in the cycle, nobody or just a small selection of adults are eligible for the up to date vaccine. Again, immunity through infection is really Australia's policy, but the science clearly shows that is gambling with Long Covid at odds that would collapse a Las Vegas casino. We can just hear Oprah calling out you get long covid and you get long covid, everybody gets long covid. If nothing else, Australia's children deserve the precautionary principle, they have not consented to this virus and have no autonomy in their schools, childcares and extra curricular activities. Certainly our children do not deserve their current abandonment and sacrifice, seemingly to ensure their parent's engagement in the workplace.

I have written this submission as an opinion piece, which I am sure you have shaken your head at on multiple occasions, wondering where my references are. This is a deliberate reflection of the public commentary and government decision making through the ongoing covid19 pandemic. Politicians and expert commentators have made many claims and steered public policy on the basis of opinion, contrary to the published peer reviewed research.

As you see, opinion in the absence of supporting evidence seems rather thin, unless of course it corresponds to your personal bias or allays your personal fears, and that has been a major problem with Australia's response to the ongoing Covid19 Pandemic. We need to urgently return to, and ensure future pandemics are managed with;

- Precautionary Principle, the long term health consequences MUST be a pivotal decision making point. An economy is unsustainable in a nation too ill to work.
- Evidence based decisions and communications. Covid19 mitigations were removed in contradiction of the evidence and research predictions.
- Children must not be treated as cannon fodder, their health sacrificed to their parents' participation in the workforce.
- The dropping of protections must be even more evidence based and clearly explained and justified than the implementation. Australia dropped covid19 mitigations and data collection despite the evidence and, at least at state based levels, despite the previously published plans.
- The reinstatement of protections must not come at political risk. This applies to politicians and expert commentators. Reinstating protections is mature and responsible, not a risk.
- A national response is essential. This must be transparent, rather than the currently secret 'National Cabinet' deliberations. Opaque decision making breeds distrust and conspiracy theories.