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### **COVID-19 Royal Commission – Parliament of Australia**

My name is Helen Hill and up until 10 December 2021 I was a Hospital Chaplain (BSocSci extended major in Chaplaincy) employed by UnitingCare Health in Brisbane Qld. I also was the Pastoral Care Department Manager for the hospital that I served in, St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital (QLD's only, and Australia's largest War Memorial Hospital); an acute care, inner city, private hospital with high regard in many specialties such as Cardiac, Orthopaedic, Neurosurgery and Emergency Department. I was also on the Extended Executive Committee of the hospital. All these roles were treasured by me and a privilege to do so. I had previously become a mature aged student and worked diligently to be able to fulfill this role.

I was terminated from my work on 10 December 2021 (due to not accepting the Covid vaccination/s), one week before Queensland's public health mandated date of 17 December, as UnitingCare determined their date one week earlier. This in itself should be examined as unwarranted.

I had written submissions to UnitingCare suggesting other ways that the situation could be managed such as testing employees before their shifts, wearing full PPE etc. and also questioning their earlier date.

I also was in management meetings where it was openly acknowledged that the mandated Covid injections were not going to stop transmission, bearing in mind this was a health facility, those were big admissions. Tertiary educated people knew that the 'vaccine' was experimental and the relevant data was not available or even possible in the short time that it had been hurriedly and coercively rolled out. Our hospital lost by termination many medical and allied health staff members who were all reasonable and well-educated people, including a surgeon, ICU and other nurses, physiotherapists.

Some administrative or technical staff members, who had no interface with patients or the public, were terminated as the rules applied to everyone. Highly experienced and dedicated staff members were sacked.

I support an inquiry that examines the discrimination to employees, and discrimination aimed at the general public also, in the way that they were treated either by employment ability or being treated equally, fairly and without prejudice as a patient.

In 2022 I was treated appallingly on several occasions when I needed medical care and attention\*. As it transpired I was within a short time of losing my eyesight due to [REDACTED] (an emergent situation not a pre-existing condition).

For decades 'we' professionals and public citizens have worked diligently to remove prejudice from our world. I have cared for people of all persuasions, diverse socio economic backgrounds, diverse worldviews, let alone different ethnicities, sexual and gender preferences, states of hygiene, mental health and medical conditions. I have cared for people with TB, Mad Cow Disease and other highly infectious conditions and treated each one with dignity and respect.

\*My medical information was not kept private – hospital staff in two different locations (Ramsay Health and an eye hospital) calling out loudly "she's not vaxed you know" with other staff and patients waiting nearby. I was told to sit separately and upon reaching an admission counter it was loudly called out "We've got a rat (RAT) here" which meant someone needed to do a test on me before admission; a protocol I accepted. I imagine it had other connotations though with cynical humour aimed at calling *me* a rat and once again not keeping my status private. Never before would we call out "we've got AIDS here" or "She's had a hysterectomy you know" or [REDACTED]. All measures previously would protect the privacy of a patient. In my role as a chaplain, or any attending allied health professional, would have been in serious trouble in disclosing a patient's private information to anyone not immediately involved in their care. I did not have a disease; I was actually very well; I simply had not had this shot in the arm. I am vaccinated for everything else prior in my life and am a very compliant person.

This sort of abhorrent discrimination and belittling of people became all too prevalent in the past few years, undoing all the good work previously done to respect others. I treat people as people, not utilising derogatory terms that diminish people. That this

became acceptable in the workplace seems unbelievable to me, had I not witnessed it first hand. Sadly, I saw comments from health professionals that I had worked closely with and respected, saying on social media that 'they would not want to care for/treat an unvaccinated patient'. This goes against all of their training and their medical oath.

The Fair Work Commission has upheld even dubious claims in the past to protect or compensate even a questionable claim against an employer, yet the covid debacle has been a protected space for employers. I believe power went to their (employers) heads; the power to veto on shaky ground, knowing that they were untouchable. This surely is what the Fair Work Commission was established to protect against. It did not matter if a person had an exemption, even if a doctor was brave enough to write one. This too should be examined.

During this time my elderly mother-in-law was also in hospital at times and in aged care. At times we were not able to visit. We were very restricted in visits in the last days of her life when she died in April 2021, aged 95. If we truly believed that good hygiene practices and PPE was effective, this restriction to visit should never have occurred.

My hope is that for these reasons and examples, that the committee will view these submissions as simple and pure reasons to reverse the damage done and future protect the values of fair and equitable workplace and community practices.

In the months that followed my termination I had to fight to have my entitlements honoured. Not only had I lost my income and future income at the time circa \$60K p.a., I had a \$20000 HECS debt to repay.

Please consider carefully and without bias the ramifications of the Covid-19 debacle.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hill

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