

Many Australians including myself became stranded overseas due to the International arrival caps imposed on returning citizens to Australia. There were no travel alerts or advice in place when I left on the [REDACTED]. It was upsetting to feel the resentment from other Australians due to the negative way international arrivals were being portrayed by some politicians and the media. Australians stranded had not been drinking cocktails on beaches we were people that have been working or attending to our families, good people that didn't deserve to be treated with such contempt.

My passport says I can pass freely without let or hindrance and it affords me every assistance and protection I may need, yet arrival caps deliberately made this difficult.

The state leaders were given far too much power by the Federal government sadly dividing Australians by their state; G2G passes for WA with people camping at borders, Queensland hospitals for Queenslanders etc. Whilst the initial response of closing borders and quarantine was imperative to stop the spread of the virus this continued for two years even though there was new data on the virus as well as vaccines. Other countries progressed Australia did not adapt at all just continued to follow China's zero Covid policy which also eventually failed. The world had a new endemic disease.

The airlines were off loading economy passengers in favour of business class tickets and were holding people to ransom with prices. Citizens were forced to pay for their own quarantining even though the **Bio Security Act Section 108** clearly states it is a Federal government responsibility. Unfairly the State and Federal government have pushed many Australians into emotional and financial hardship. Then there are those that still haven't paid, whilst some of us were passed on to debt collectors and were asset tested why..? Shouldn't we all be treated equally? Not penalised.

Hotels used for quarantine were not fit for the purpose, no fresh air, poor hygiene, poor food, lack of exercise and Vitamin D all which are imperative for one's physical and mental wellbeing. Celebrities, some not Australian, were able to quarantine at home and sportspeople had access to outdoor spaces. Politicians should be ashamed of this inequality; they wonder why the voting public don't trust them anymore.

The repatriation flights were full the moment the emails were received, yet most Qantas planes were mothballed whilst receiving a financial support package from the government. I registered for repatriation and was not helped at all; there was no system in place to progress, it became a lottery. Australians that had left after the pandemic started or who had not lived in Australia for 10 years+ got flights before me.

I was astonished by Mark McGowan's suggestion to use the detention centre on Christmas Island, would he send his wife and daughter there!!! Australian citizens are not illegal immigrants or criminals; thank God the Federal government had some sense on that ugly proposal.

I own a house **my primary residence**, my personal belongings, my car etc. were all in WA all unattended and vulnerable for a year causing me a lot of anxiety and many sleepless nights. The McGowan's government was happy to continue to collect my council rates, water rates, vehicle road license etc. all for services I was unable to use whilst paying second living expenses trapped overseas through no fault of my own. If he really cared about Western Australians, as he so often claimed, he could have use his surplus budget to prioritise getting western Australians home or built an adequately ventilated quarantine centre within reach of hospitals. Oh wait! He did..... after the pandemic ,never been used.

We are a country built on migration, living in a globalised world; the lack of compassion for people who had family, sick and dying relatives and funerals across closed borders was truly heart breaking, cruel and unnecessary. After finally returning to Australia my mother in law became sick. We could not go through the mistreatment and expense of flights and forced quarantine again. My husband had to say goodbye to his mother via Videocall and watch her funeral online all whilst Scott Morrison had a beer and a BBQ in Cornwall, UK at the G7 summit looking up the ancestors he'd never met, whilst depriving others from seeing their families for two years.

I am confident no lessons will be learnt from the international arrival caps and feedback from the 40.000+ Australians abandoned overseas and the 200,000+ that endured quarantining begging for balconies and adequate ventilation.

Our Quarantine experience was far from the Gold standard the state leaders claimed.

It took 3 hrs to get us from Perth airport to the city which is 20 minutes away, the flashing blue light police convoy was totally unnecessary, we are not criminals and after PCR testing before boarding flights also not positive. There was no system of prioritizing elderly or young children, no water available and no social distancing our safety was of no importance at all. After a further 2 hours sat on a hot bus waiting to be checked in I collapsed from dehydration. My husband had called for help and had asked for water, the Police failed to help anyone their only response was to threaten to handcuff anyone who they perceived as complaining. I was laying in the gutter in Perth CBD being treated by the hotel medical team and was wheeled to my room on a porter's trolley, I was ashamed of my Country and those employed to protect us..!

Hotel rooms were not designed for two week stays or infectious disease control. They did not have provision to store or prepare food so being told by staff that friends can drop off care packs is pointless and even those were searched!

Washing up of plates and cutlery had to take place in the bathroom sink, where in our case the sink was way to small and the toilet had no closing lid very impractical and unhygienic. Our room consisted of a table with two hard chairs and a TV that could only be viewed from sitting on the bed. I'm in my 50's and my husband 60's sitting on a bed was not comfortable, manageable for a city break but not 24/7 living for two weeks.

Rooms were in an enclosed corridor with no ventilation so any airborne virus could be transmitted within the hotels. Returning citizens were being called “travellers” and blamed when someone got infected when it was the hotel system that was at fault.

As the hotels were used solely for quarantine there was no reason why an allocated hour of outdoor time in a restricted supervised area such as a roof terrace was not achievable. New Zealand managed they understood that the virus was not transmitted outside providing social distance was maintained and that Vitamin D was vital for a healthy immune system.

We eat a health balanced diet yet we had to put up with carbohydrates and sugary food daily, pasta, rice and No fresh vegetables. The food arrived luke warm, whilst I barely ate my husband did but at a cost of two lots of food poisoning and severe diarrhoea. Being in an enclosed unventilated room, washing up in the bathroom with a husband with diarrhoea was not pleasant or hygienic. We went in to quarantine healthy and came out unwell; no one gave a damn about us, appalling treatment.

It was scary losing all of my Freedom and Human rights. Knowing that Murderers and Rapist were getting fairer treatment was a bitter pill to swallow.

Then we had forced Vaccination in WA with Job losses and public segregation. The vaccine did not prevent the individual from getting or transmitting the virus. An unvaccinated person could NOT buy a coffee or go in shops but could walk through a shopping centre to get their groceries. The senseless rules implemented by government just did not add up. Yes I am vaccinated.

Our State leaders had more power than the PM of Australia! Both State and Federal leaders had an inability to have a balanced debate and tell the truth even if it was uncomfortable. This has led to government saddling the next two generations with billions in debt not to mention what emotional damage has been done. Small businesses, tourism, some individuals and our international reputation have all been damage. Trust in our government, Police and our hospital systems are all in question.

The World Health Organisation statistics show that every country whether they lock down, quarantined, closed borders or abandon their citizens have had the same outcome. Less than 1% of each country's population died of Covid, most of which were elderly or had another health conditions.

Of course those lives were important and that is where the focus and protection should have been, we had that information within the first year. Covid became about power, political popularity and winning votes not the science or health advice which was so often said but certainly not followed.

**Has the response caused more damage than the disease? If politicians and those conducting these inquiries can't be honest about what we got right and what we got wrong we will just do it all again and will have learnt nothing.**