

13 December 2023

## **Submission to the Federal Government Covid-19 inquiry**

To whom it may concern

I have only just become aware of the opportunity to provide public submissions to the Federal Government's inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic response. The lack of publicity regarding this inquiry indicates to me a lack of serious interest by Government in actually learning any lessons about what happened in Australia during this period.

Added to this, by limiting the scope of this inquiry into the actions of the Federal Government and its advisers only, rather than also looking into the actions of respective State Governments and their Health officials, Schools Ministers, Police Chiefs and other policy makers, makes a mockery of the intent of the inquiry.

While limiting my response to Federal Government actions is difficult, as it is clear that it was the actions of the State Governments that created the vast majority of the misery and misuse of power evidenced during the Covid era, I would make the following points to the inquiry.

1. The inability or lack of will to assist overseas Australian's to return home in the early stages of the pandemic was a disgrace. The Federal Government's decision to close the border and to limit travel into Australia did little to prevent infection, but created deep distress for families with loved ones overseas. Australians should have the right to travel home under any circumstances.
2. It was clear from April 2020 that Covid-19 was a virus that largely affected the infirm elderly. This should have been communicated to the public at the earliest opportunity and removed the scare tactics promoted by various health "experts" and the media. It is irresponsible of the Federal Government to allow this unnecessary fear to become established.
3. The forced use of hotel quarantine did virtually nothing to protect the community, but caused significant mental distress for those involved – not to mention financial burden. The option to quarantine at home or with family should have been considered.
4. As is now clearly evidenced, Lockdowns were a financial, economic, health, education, social and societal disaster. There is very little evidence anywhere in the world that lockdowns prevented transmission or saved lives. Indeed, there is growing evidence that the impacts of lockdowns are magnitudes of times worse than any near term benefits they claim to have achieved. It is imperative that the inquiry explicitly determines the detrimental impacts of lockdowns – all of which were foreseeable.
5. The Federal Government should have taken firmer action to prevent State Governments from excessive actions that limited the freedoms of Australian citizens. Border closures, mask mandates, vaccine mandates and vaccine passports were all examples of excessive over-reach by State Governments, yet the Federal Government did nothing to challenge these actions.

6. Border closures were particularly damaging, with families denied the opportunity to see dying loved ones and people denied access to hospitals in neighbouring states. Shame on State officials for these actions, but the Federal Government did not once seek to challenge this situation in the courts – which if anything else would at least have demonstrated Federal Government opposition to these State mandates.
7. The vaccine approval process needs to be examined closely by this inquiry. Evidence is emerging of substantial consequences of the vaccines, not least significant numbers of vaccine related deaths and injury, that in normal circumstances would have led to at least a pause and further investigation, if not a complete halt in their use. It is also not at all clear why these experimental vaccines were approved for pregnant women and children, who were at virtually no risk of dying from Covid, unless they had significant co-morbidities. The precautionary principle of “First do no harm” seemed to be thrown out of the window.
8. One of the outcomes of the inquiry must be to determine whether Australia is a country or a collection of states. I believe it should be the former and that this needs to be further enshrined in law to protect the way we respond to future pandemics. What is the point of a Chief Medical Officer if State Health officials can set their own (sometimes conflicting) rules. The same concern applies to State Premiers.
9. Finally, the inquiry also needs to consider the impact of Social media on the reactions to the pandemic. There is growing evidence that proper debate and discussion was not permitted during the pandemic – whether directed by Federal Government or by the Social Media companies themselves. It was clear from April 2020, that many of the Government’s Covid-19 policies (State and Federal) made no sense on a population that was largely at only limited risk from the virus. A few examples: Limiting outdoor exercise, requiring masks when entering a café, but letting them be taken off while seated, married couples having to wear masks while dancing and yet people (some highly credentialed) were silenced, arrested or fined for just expressing disagreement. This is not an acceptable way for a democracy to operate. In times of uncertainty it is always better to bring people with you by the strength of your argument rather than shutting down dissenting voices. The role of Mainstream and Social media in silencing alternative viewpoints in order to control “the narrative” and in stigmatizing citizens who had the temerity to ask legitimate questions is a lesson that needs to be learnt for the future. The Authoritarian impulses displayed during the pandemic is something that should concern anyone who believed in a free, democratic country.

I look forward to reading the conclusions of the inquiry, though if it is anything like the one underway in the UK at the moment, I have very little faith that any meaningful lessons will be forthcoming.

With Kind Regards

James Longfield