

After a successful pregnancy in 2016, followed by two [REDACTED] in 2018 and 2019, I became pregnant again in early 2020. Kept safe during this period by Australia's international border protections and QLDs strict travel rules, [REDACTED] was born [REDACTED]. Miraculously we began to talk of vaccines that would soon be available, and an end appeared to be in sight.

Now [REDACTED], my youngest remains unvaccinated due to Australia's inequitable vaccine eligibility requirements. My [REDACTED], vaccinated as soon as he was able to be in January 2022 before he started prep, is now, two years later, not allowed any further vaccinations. He goes to a school where the teachers refuse to follow even the simplest measures to open the windows, and our attempts to pay for air purifiers in his class have been ignored. An independent school, we are at the whims of the school 'leadership' with no recourse due to the lack of either statewide or national clean air standards.

Our [REDACTED] has remained Covid free due to wearing a mask daily and carrying a portable air purifier. It's a big ask of a [REDACTED] and now [REDACTED] year old. Our [REDACTED] has remained Covid free as I've given up a [REDACTED] to keep him out of childcare. My husband works from home, and we all continue to mask indoors and avoid large outdoor gatherings. We are all proudly Novids and have spent more than enough on tests to be confident of our status.

We are not immunocompromised, but we have family members who are. At first we continued to be careful for them. Now, seeing the effects Covid infections have had on many around us, we continue to take precautions for us. Perhaps on a global level whether we are healthy or not makes little difference, but to us it matters a great deal.

I'm forever grateful that the federal Australian government imposed international border controls in a timely manner at the beginning of the pandemic. This decision undoubtedly saved many lives and much heartbreak. The decision to open them again before every Australian was eligible for the vaccines, however, was incredibly negligent.

In late 2021, borders reopened even though children under 18 were not able to receive a vaccine till January 2022. A massive wave followed, and among others, children died. In QLD, the school year was delayed somewhat but with several months between the first vaccine and the second, the school year was in full swing before even the most conscientious parents were able to fully protect their children. No doubt many children and their families have suffered as a result.

We waited patiently for the news that under 5s would be next and almost two years later are still waiting.

It is completely unacceptable that we left our [REDACTED] unprotected to this virus after we had all done so much for so long to protect those most at risk of dying. The idea propagated by government and the media that children wouldn't be affected or act as vectors was absurd at the time and has been proven to be nothing but lies now. Anyone who spread this message should be removed from their roles and held accountable their decisions.

Despite approval by TGA, our [REDACTED] are still unprotected by this virus. If the reason is due to the direction given to ATAGI by the government, then those directions need to be updated. If the blame falls on ATAGI instead, then those people should be fired and representatives found who are across the latest research on the damage Covid is causing people of all ages, and the role vaccination has in mitigating those effects. Either way, both the directions given, and the deliberations of ATAGI should be made public in this matter and those responsible held accountable.

In the United States, children the same age as my [REDACTED] have not only been vaccinated but have been able to be boosted with the latest vaccines. Children the same age as my [REDACTED] would have had at least 4 shots by now. The lack of access to vaccines and boosters is inequitable, and not backed by current scientific research. Compared to other countries our children are being left behind, and this will have long term effects on the productivity of our country. Already in my [REDACTED] class children are returning from week-long "illnesses" only to fall asleep at their desks for weeks after. What do we honestly expect will happen after another year of ongoing infections? Another 5? We need to act now.

If access to children's vaccines is due to cost, then the relevant organisation should allow parents to buy access. That is of course incredibly inequitable, but in a country where federal parliamentarians have access to clean air with updated HVAC systems and our school children and aged care residents do not, Australians are already suffering from that inequality daily.

To me there are several actions that needs to occur to rectify some of our biggest mistakes in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic.

1. Allow all Australians access to the latest Covid vaccines currently approved by the TGA with the aim of reducing spread and long-term damage caused, not just reducing death in the acute phase. Updating our recommendations to fall in line with those given by the US's CDC would be a start.
2. Create enforceable national clean air standards with an immediate focus on schools, childcares, and aged care facilities. All rooms should be monitored for CO2 levels and virus levels (once that technology has been scaled up) and purified and/or ventilated to ensure a reduction in spread of airborne viruses. These measures will also help to create fresh air in the event of bushfires and other allergens and are necessary to prepare ourselves for future pandemics. At a minimum all schools should have air as clean as our federal politicians enjoy.
3. Create a national public health campaign to explain the ongoing risks of Covid, how and why ventilation and air purifiers can be used to minimise spread and encourage high quality masks to be worn by anyone and everyone when ill.
4. High quality masks should be mandated in every healthcare environment for all staff members at a minimum. Occasionally with [REDACTED] we've needed to go to the hospital and have seen staff tugging at surgical masks falling off their noses. These are clearly not suitable and aerosol science tells us they aren't effective either. Fitted, high quality

masks on all healthcare workers will substantially reduce spread, and the risks of accessing care for the vulnerable members of our society. Reusable masks could reduce waste, and best prepare us to respond to current and future threats from airborne pathogens. This should be non-negotiable. It took 100 years for doctors to accept the importance of hand washing. We don't have that kind of time for them to figure out that now we need them to wear masks too.

5. All government advisors and committee members whose advice has proven to be incorrect not just now but at the time it was made should be removed from their position. For example, anyone who suggested children are not vectors for the virus does not deserve another chance to spread their ignorance. Those suggesting surgical masks are just as effective as N95 masks should similarly be dismissed. A lot of poor advice was given during our response to this pandemic, and those actors needs to be held accountable for it.