

Submission to the COVID-19 Response Inquiry

Introduction

I am an Australian citizen, married with children and resident in Tasmania. I am an [REDACTED] with an education level up to bachelor's degree. During the covid period I faced immense pressure to take a vaccine which I did not want to take. This has created anxiety in me and much conflict between family members, work colleagues and community members in general.

My submission relates to the term of reference

Governance including the role of the Commonwealth Government, responsibilities of state and territory governments, national governance mechanisms (such as National Cabinet, the National Coordination Mechanism and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee) and advisory bodies supporting responses to COVID-19.

Submission

When the vaccines were available in Australia I was very nervous about taking any of them for a number of reasons.

1. These medicines utilised new technology which had not been widely tested on humans.
2. The medicines had undergone very limited tests on humans and we had no long term data on their safety.
3. There was anecdotal evidence emerging from people who had had the medicine and within a short time had reactions. Temporal correlation yes but enough to make me very hesitant to rush into taking the medicine myself.

I felt huge pressure to take the vaccines against my will. I had huge reservations but the pressure to take them was even greater. I felt that the state government was applying pressure for me to take the vaccines in advertising and restricting our access if we had not taken the medicine. However the worst for me was that employers seemed to think they had the right to force us to take the medicine in order to work.

In the Australian Immunisation Handbook, section Valid consent the criteria for valid consent are:

1. *It must be given by a person with legal capacity, and of sufficient intellectual capacity to understand the implications of receiving a vaccine.*
2. *It must be given voluntarily in the absence of undue pressure, coercion or manipulation.*
3. *It must cover the specific procedure that is to be performed.*
4. *It can only be given after the potential risks and benefits of the relevant vaccine, the risks of not having it, and any alternative options have been explained to the person.*

Point 2 was not adhered to in countless occasions in Australia. I felt immense pressure to take the medicine in order to work, and to enter places in community. This pressure came from my employer

and from relentless government advertising on radio, television, social media and video delivery platforms. There are also many many testimonies of people who feel they were being unduly pressured into taking the medicine to keep their job. This should never be the case and especially not when the medicine is novel as is the case with this medicine.

It is a disgrace that government placed so much advertising pressure on us and on employers to the point that they either felt they had to pressure employees to comply or they felt they had an inalienable right to pressure employees. And then for both state and federal government leaders to repeatedly say that they were not mandating covid vaccination is dishonest. The pressure they were applying was, in effect, making it mandatory.

Also, Part 4 was not adhered to. In many many cases the vaccination was given without explanation of potential risks.

I hope we never get into this situation again. I would like the level of government advertising to be more restricted. There was not good evidence that this medicine was either safe or effective, especially in the early stages of its release. I would like the government to make it very very clear to employers when a medicine is not mandated for work and to take action against those who apply undue pressure on employees for not taking the medication. Sacking is undue pressure. I would also like, in every instance a vaccination is given that potential risks are clearly explained.