

Dear Panel:

This is yet another plea I'm submitting to a government body/individual about the response to the Covid pandemic. I will write of my experience and what I learned and what I hope we do differently if there is a next time.

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I worked for the NSW Government during the lockdown. For most of the covid period, we were advised to work from home. Towards the end of 2021, we were informed that we would need to return to the office in early 2022, and to do that we would need to show proof of vaccination.

I have an [REDACTED] which did not qualify for an official vaccine exemption. I asked my GP at the medical centre I attended about the safety of the covid vaccines for someone like me. Without hesitation or even asking for details he said, "No problem". A short time later I discovered from reading the report of the Pfizer clinical trials that they did not include autoimmune subjects. **How could the medical profession be so certain that a new vaccine with no long-term safety data would have no impact on someone with an already [REDACTED]** The medical profession were handicapped and unable to respond individually to their patients due to government orders. There was no room for genuine medical practice drawing on their own training and knowledge of patient history. **If we find ourselves in this position again, place some trust in trained doctors to practice their profession, especially during a rapidly-evolving and unprecedented pandemic, where experimenting and open scientific discourse should be encouraged, not silenced or punished.**

I applied for an employer exemption from my Department. It was refused. There was reference to a workplace risk assessment. **If the vaccinated in the building were protected, what was the risk in having a small number of unvaccinated staff in the building? It was never explained who was being protected from whom. It was also known at the time, that the vaccines did not reduce transmission, so the vaccinated could be spreading virus also. That fact was roundly ignored by the senior executives in order to pursue the mission to return everyone to the office and to punish the unvaccinated.**

I had to leave a well-paying job that I was performing well at, or else face misconduct proceedings by the Department for refusing to get vaccinated. Despite having performed well while working from home, WFH was not considered by the Department as an option. **Why not? Since then, I've discovered that many NSW Government employees continue to work from home.**

I discovered the National Clinical Evidence Covid taskforce website and was concerned that the evidence for treatments was provided by the pharmaceutical companies that manufactured the recommended drug. **I am still concerned about the validity of the evidence and the absence of ongoing data-collection and research in Australia into the side-effects and efficacy of the vaccines and treatments.**

Further reflections

- Vaccine mandates added another layer of suffering to an already struggling populace. We continue to deal with the effects of the job-losses in health and education during that time.
- Vaccine mandates were unnecessary. A strong public health message that advised staying at home when ill would have sufficed. A targeted vaccination strategy prioritising the vulnerable for their own protection would have resulted in safety and less societal division (division which still persists – is this what we want for Australia?)

- The official messaging that pitted the vaccinated against the unvaccinated added yet another layer of suffering. It was irresponsible of the health authorities to sow division.
- Research into early treatment options should have been encouraged from the start rather than solely relying on vaccine development. Overseas, there was evidence supporting a range of effective, low-cost, available treatments that helped to minimise the effects of the disease. Many regimens were developed by doctors at the frontline who had to improvise – and did so successfully, if they weren't hampered by the health authorities. Experimentation by doctors should be encouraged, not punished. What better way to manage a situation that was changing daily than to decentralise the management of these front-line aspects.

Post script: I remain unvaccinated. I have been on public transport, visited shopping malls frequently, been in small enclosed spaces with others (homes, cafes, halls, restaurants) and also moved in with my vaccinated [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to look after them when they caught covid simultaneously. I have not had covid. I know of vaccinated/boosted acquaintances who have caught covid 4 to 5 times.

So, in the interests of scientific discovery and public health management, it is worth asking: Just how safe and effective are these vaccines?