

My name is [REDACTED] I am a wife, mother, grandmother, and daughter. I am a qualified teacher, but I decided to quit my job of [REDACTED] years as I did not feel safe at school due to the high risk of contracting Covid 19. I did not want to pass the virus on to my elderly frail mother or my husband who have health issues that make them more at risk of serious illness if they contract Covid 19. I am currently a full-time carer for my very frail [REDACTED]-year-old mother. I am also a [REDACTED] tutor. My husband ([REDACTED]), who is also a teacher retired once he was no longer able to work from home. It was never our intention to leave the teaching profession early, but we felt we had no other choice.

My suggestions and feedback about the key health response for Covid 19 and future pandemics.

I felt that the health response was confusing as different politicians, and CHO's seemed to have different opinions about how to best respond to the pandemic.

I was very happy with the response and advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton. I found that his advice was based on science and was given to provide the best possible protection for all people. **I appreciated the lockdowns and online learning.** It was hard but necessary and I believe it saved lives while we were waiting to learn more about the virus and for the hope of vaccinations and possible treatments.

My suggestions for future health responses include more public education on how to protect ourselves from airborne viruses. I find even now people do not realise that Covid 19 is an airborne virus. There are still debates over whether masks work as a layer of protection.

I believe that the next response needs to be a layered response based on science. We cannot just depend on vaccination alone. We need to make public health advice visible and easy to access.

If we want people to be responsible for their own health we need to educate them. This should start in schools. We need education about N95 masks and how they can protect people, especially if everyone is wearing them properly. We need education about the importance of clean air, the importance of fresh air and air purifiers.

We need to normalize layered protection. As a society we need to normalize masks as a protection against Covid 19 and other airborne viruses. We need an advertising campaign like we had for smoking and skin cancer.

There are too many people who believe that Covid 19 is just like mild flu. However, as we know it is still killing people every day and there are thousands with long covid. It is still a serious illness. We need education.

For people with disabilities, the elderly, people with certain health conditions, the immunocompromised the risk of serious illness and death is still high. For my husband, myself as a carer and my frail aged Mum we feel we have been left behind and I know that there are many that feel the same way.

We need education so that people know that the new normal for some people is a cautious layered approach including boosters, masks, avoiding crowded indoor places, meeting outdoors.

I would like to see mandated masks brought back into every hospital, aged care facility and health care facilities and dentists in Australia. It would save lives, improve the mental health of high-risk groups and reduce the spread of Covid 19 and future viruses. I would like the future response to be that every life matters and that everything possible is being done to educate people and to reduce the spread.