

1 Introduction

All levels of Australian government failed spectacularly in demonstrably criminal ways. Myopia, cynicism, and fear seem to have been the only guiding principles of government during that time and the costs incurred we will be paying for for generations to come. The most insidious costs are seen in the image of government itself, with government increasingly thinking its remit is broader than it actually is and a corresponding further decline in public trust. The terms of reference, and observing the inquiries of similar governments in the UK and Canada, make it clear that governments haven't actually learnt any lessons and aren't interested in learning any. In the end, government will have caused more death, harm, and misery than the virus could ever have hoped to. This inquiry seems an attempt to whitewash the damage government caused, but perhaps you will prove me wrong.

I am just an ordinary citizen. Government prevented my mother from being present at the birth of her first grandchild even through a difficult labour. That is something she'd have gladly risked her life for, but that, of course, didn't matter. Instead, the parents were kept in prison like conditions in a room of the hospital for a week. My mother generally trusted government, but her third shot, and first mRNA based shot, which she did not wish to take, almost certainly contributed to her death 10 months later.

2 Governance

Looking at what happened during those years, government was clearly invariably the biggest source of misinformation and disinformation. Take masking, for one of many possible examples. We've known for decades¹ that masking is pointless for controlling respiratory viruses, including for this virus both before² and after³ mandates were put in place by state governments. The Federal Government also kept up the pretence that masking was effective, and went out of its way to censor even mild dissent⁴. No thought was given to the

¹2003 Sydney Morning Herald, Farce mask: it's safe for only 20 minutes <https://www.smh.com.au/national/farce-mask-its-safe-for-only-20-minutes-20030427-gdgnyo.html>

²2020 Cochrane Library Review <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD006207.pub5/full>

³2023 Cochrane Library Review <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD006207.pub6/full>

⁴Twitter Files Extra: The Covid Censorship Requests of Australia's Department of Home Affairs <https://www.racket.news/p/twitter-files-extra-the-covid-censorship>

externalities, as if the action were entirely cost free. It is dangerous to make people think they are safer than they actually are. There are likely health problems incurred by wearing the same mask for prolonged periods of time. Federal and State Governments beat us over the head about Climate Change and pollution, yet government was responsible for a massive increase in plastic pollution; you still can't walk anywhere without seeing discarded masks. Nor was any consideration given to how the social fabric is damaged by treating fellow citizens as nothing other than vectors of disease.

3 Health Response

It is difficult to overstate how morally repugnant it is to discriminate based on whether an individual has undergone a medical procedure; i.e. vaccination status. This is precisely what the Federal Government enabled. The government's own data shows that they knew the vaccine was not particularly effective or well studied⁵ and very quickly got signals from the State governments that there was a worrying safety signal⁶. And now we're rapidly finding that repeated exposures to this novel technology makes you more susceptible to infection⁷. This was topped off with the laughable deportation of Novak Djokovic. The man had already been infected and recovered from this virus. Did the government think vaccines have some magical properties? The entire point of vaccination is to mimic natural immunity derived from natural infection. Then the bar required to enforce a population wide medical treatment is extraordinarily high, and the government knew that it had not met this requirement before it enabled State Governments to engage in discrimination. Therefore, the Medicare Vaccine Passport scheme should be destroyed with extreme prejudice. It was just typical Big Brother government overreach of the most deranged kind. Something like it should never be allowed to arise again.

4 Lockdowns

As untried and antithetical to liberal democracies, we should have expected that lockdowns would come with huge costs (and some of us did). Indeed, the

⁵Nonclinical Evaluation Report by The Therapeutic Goods Administration, January 2021 <https://www.tga.gov.au/sites/default/files/foi-2389-06.pdf>

⁶Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance, Annual Report 2021 <https://www.health.wa.gov.au/~media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Immunisation/Western-Australia-Vaccine-Safety-Surveillance-Annual-Report-2021.pdf>

⁷Effectiveness of a fourth SARS-CoV-2 vaccine dose in previously infected individuals from Austria <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/eci.14136>

person credited with eradicating Smallpox, Dr Donald Henderson was prescient when he said

Experience has shown that communities faced with epidemics or other adverse events respond best and with the least anxiety when the normal social functioning of the community is least disrupted. Strong political and public health leadership to provide reassurance and to ensure that needed medical care services are provided are critical elements. If either is seen to be less than optimal, a manageable epidemic could move toward catastrophe.

Indeed, we know most of the cost of living crisis was caused by State lockdowns and Federal Government money printing⁸. Even the least experienced economists working for Government would be able to tell you inflation would be an obvious consequence of artificially shutting down the economy and printing hundreds of billions of dollars.

The problem, of course, was typical government myopia. I know from Freedom Of Information Requests, that the ACT Government did not consider any of the externalities of lockdowns before they were imposed. There were no documents considered by the ACT Cabinet from the Department of Health or the Treasury that examined the potential negative consequences of government's actions. There was no cost-benefit analysis. There was no consideration of what the purpose of life is. There was no consideration of the coming health time bomb as a large percentage of Australians got out of the habit of exercising due to gym and other leisure activities being shutdown. There was no consideration of the mental health effects due to coming financial pressures. And, to top it off, we know from comparisons with other countries, there are no benefits to lockdowns. Australia's excess mortality is comparable to or exceeds places that did not lockdown⁹ and has erased a decade of progress according to ABS data¹⁰. I certainly would not be surprised if other State governments also did not consider the consequences of their actions, and that this may have been led by cynicism at the Federal level.

Of course, government never has to bear the consequences of their actions. No one will be held responsible for the biggest wealth transfer in Australia's

⁸Fiscal Policy in the COVID-19 Era <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1759-3441.12382>

⁹How COVID-19 has affected mortality in 2020 to 2022 <https://www.actuaries.asn.au/Library/Opinion/2023/REPORTV2COVID19.pdf>

¹⁰Deaths, Australia 2022 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/deaths-australia/latest-release>

history from the least well off to the most well off. That's ultimately all lockdowns were. Enjoyed by those that were well-off enough to afford to live in their large houses and have the plebeians make deliveries to them. And if the plebeians complained, they became kulaks out to kill grandma. Meanwhile, State Governments couldn't keep the virus out of aged care facilities because those same kulaks were "essential workers" at those same facilities, still working three "essential" jobs to make ends meet. Government is responsible for that social acid. It has not shown any interest in learning lessons or holding anybody to account. This is a scenario where the Nuremberg Defence, 'just following orders', is wholly insufficient. Morally abhorrent orders must not be followed. Yet police officers that manhandled pregnant women¹¹ and approaching and choking people on the street are still employed¹². There was no condemnation of the Northern Territory Government for indefinite detention of innocent people not even accused of any crime nor even proven to be sick¹³ (and being sick is not and cannot be a crime).

5 Purpose Of Government

All of this sits upon a bigger social problem that the public has increasingly come to look to government to solve problems that government is incapable of solving. This is due to decades of various politicians making promises they never had any hope of meeting, meanwhile the decay of community has gone unaddressed, with many Australians unaware of the name of their neighbours. Indeed, the only way to truly address a situation like the one we experienced is for families to come together to help each other, for neighbours to help neighbours and the understanding that it is the relationships between people that give life meaning and government can only ever be an impediment to that.

This is really a question of the necessary fictions at the heart of our value system. I agree with Justice Andrew Inglis Clark, the man Sir William Deane called the primary architect of our Constitution, that Natural Rights are the

¹¹Victorian Bar criticises arrest of pregnant woman for Facebook lockdown protest post as 'disproportionate' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/sep/03/victoria-police-arrested-pregnant-woman-facebook-post-zoe-buhler-australia-warn-lockdown-protesters>

¹²Victoria Police officer in viral 'choking' arrest video cleared after internal investigation <https://www.news.com.au/world/coronavirus/australia/victoria-police-officer-in-viral-choking-arrest-video-cleared-after-internal-investigation/news-story/53bc9726db12ceb9063876f46a213203>

¹³Inside Australia's Covid Internment Camp <https://unherd.com/the-post/inside-australias-covid-internment-camp/>

foundation of a good society and it is the role of government to protect those rights. There are situations where what the majority wants cannot override the rights of the individual; after all, a gang-rape is democratic. In return, it is the duty of the citizen to support the people and society around them.

For me personally, I know I'll never trust government again as long as I live. So, why submit to this inquiry? Because in the long term reason will again eventually prevail. Particularly when this generation of children grow up and realise how badly government failed them, and stole from their education, health and financial future. In several decades, there will be an official government apology, and it is my duty to stand for the better angels now. What I expect from this inquiry is typical government corruption and coverup (ASIC being another current example). It was impossible to get any elected official to listen or respond during the height of their mania, with no sign of that having changed since things have died down. It all seemed to be the classic *Yes, Minister* joke: '[P]oliticians logic: something must be done, this is something, therefore we must do it.' That may be an aspect of human nature, but it isn't unreasonable to expect more.

I'll close with a classic quote from C.S. Lewis¹⁴:

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell of earth. This very kindness stings with intolerable insult. To be "cured" against one's will and cured of states which we may not regard as disease is to be put on a level of those who have not yet reached the age of reason or those who never will; to be classed with infants, imbeciles, and domestic animals.

¹⁴C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology (Making of Modern Theology)*