

Statement of the Australian Covid Medical Network

www.CovidMedicalNetwork.com

'Health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being
and not merely the absence of a disease or infirmity'.

WHO Constitution, 1948.

It has become increasingly clear that the response to the SARS-CoV-2 virus by the Victorian government is now doing more harm than good, and will cause more deaths and result in far more negative health effects than the virus itself and risks creating Victoria's worst ever public health crisis.

Many Australian doctors and other health professionals consider the lockdown measures to be disproportionate, not scientifically based, unilaterally authoritarian and the cause of widespread suffering for many Victorians.

Thereby, we Australian Doctors and Health Professionals, in solidarity with thousands of international doctors, call for the cessation of all disproportionate measures that contravene the International Siracusa Principles.

These Siracusa Principles¹ are part of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a signatory², and are recommended by the World Health Organisation³. They require all public health management policies to meet standards of legality, evidence-based necessity and proportionality, and that they recognise our basic, universal and non-derogable human rights.

Of particular concern is the needless harm and suffering being experienced by the young, especially children and adolescents, by the denial of normal social interactions such as play, schooling and relationships with family and friends. We hold grave concerns that these effects on child and adolescent health will impact their future wellbeing for many years to come⁴. This is occurring despite the fact that the virus poses a negligible risk to children.

¹ The Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation of Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/1984/07/Siracusa-principles-ICCPR-legal-submission-1985-eng.pdf>

² Australian Government: Attorney-General's Department: <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/international-human-rights-system>

³ WHO Chapter 11.5 - Public Health Emergencies, p176-177
<https://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/health-law/chapter11.pdf>

⁴ "Hidden pandemic trauma harming children" News GP -RACGP .31 August 2020

We consider the ambition for 'viral elimination' and the intent of achieving "zero cases for a period of time"⁵, to be both irrational and unachievable, according to the best local and international evidence. Furthermore, the latest evidence suggests that 'lockdown measures' in general have limited effectiveness in reducing the viral health impacts in the long term.

Policies such as curfews, local travel restrictions, reduced exercise and outdoor activities, imposed isolation and the quarantining of the healthy, enforced mask wearing in open spaces, the denial of children's play, socialisation and education with friends and peers and the disruption of family relationships, as well as the arbitrary application of laws, are contrary to common-sense and are seriously compromising the health of individuals and the wider society.

Furthermore, these policies have resulted in interruptions and delays of both public and private health-care services, created unnecessary patient fear and panic, which has adversely impacted access to general health-care and resulted in delayed presentations of many serious medical conditions, including cancers and heart disease. They have also caused a dramatic increase in mental health problems due to the imposition of isolation and loneliness on the elderly and the vulnerable, the creation of significant financial and relationship strain for many families and induced unnecessary levels of fear and anxiety among health-workers and their loved ones.

These measures are especially concerning given the growing evidence of the very limited virulence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus for the vast majority of the population. These concerns are amplified when one considers the serious limitations and problems of PCR Covid swab tests for population screening and the resultant lack of clarity concerning definitions of 'Covid cases' and so called 'Covid Deaths', especially in the setting of Residential Aged Care.

These measures represent a culture of 'anti-health' and a denial of the principles of good medical practice. Such a disproportionate approach, coupled with a fear-based media narrative comprised of inadequate and misleading information, is a great concern and must cease as soon as possible.

It is incumbent on all of us to examine the bigger picture and the terrible harms that have been inflicted on our society, in the name of a very narrow concept of 'health'. We must re-evaluate the importance of our basic rights and freedoms and reflect deeply on what kind of society we wish to live in.

We believe there is a better way forward for Victorians and all Australians. A path founded on the principles of good medical practice, including:

- Openness and Honesty
- Humility and Consultation
- Collaboration and Respect for Autonomy
- To always encourage with Care, Hope and Reassurance;
- Never to provoke Fear, Panic or Terror.

⁵ Part 2—Amendment of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. Definitions: Section 2:

"...COVID-19 may pose a material risk of substantial injury or prejudice to health of human beings even when the rate of community transmission of COVID-19 in Victoria is low or there have been no cases of COVID-19 in Victoria for a period of time."

In light of these concerns we respectfully call for the following seven actions:

- An open, honest and transparent discussion with the general public, with easily accessible information made available about the evidence and underlying assumptions used to inform decisions about the management of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak. This should include, in particular, the evidence to justify the grave impacts on children and adolescents as well as clear estimates of the broader health and socio-economic costs and impacts
- More collaboration and engagement with a broader range of medical specialists, other healthcare professionals and a diverse group of interdisciplinary leaders who can inform and assist in responding to the growing public health and socio-economic crisis we are witnessing, especially among the young, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable in our community.
- An urgent review of the role of State of Emergency and State of Disaster powers in the management of public health issues and crises, with consideration given to how other more democratic approaches could be utilised in the future.
- An urgent review of the general management of pandemics in Australia, including an examination of the need for better communication, coordination and collaboration between State and Federal Governments. There is also an urgent need to establish clear and well-defined 'stand-down' parameters, in case of 'false alarms' or when it becomes foreseeable or evidential that the harms of the controlling policies are greater than the direct health impacts, or fatal potential, of the disease under consideration.
- Consideration of the Commonwealth Government taking on greater responsibility and a more central role in organising and implementing a coherent and effective nationwide response in the management of future pandemics and national public health crises.
- Consideration of an international initiative to create reliable and effective 'early warning systems' which would deliver accurate assessments of the dangers and realities of emerging pandemics, and would assist in more considered and proportionate responses to bio-security threats in the future.
- Finally, we implore the governments of Australia, state and federal, to be ever mindful of the balance between loss of freedoms and basic rights and the promotion of public health, never losing sight of the potential for collateral harms to exceed the effects of the disease being managed.