

## Protest Penalised Against Lockdown Measures in Western Sydney

### My Story

On 31 August 2021, I was served by NSW Police with two infringement notices for peaceful and silent protest against the draconian measures being enacted in Western Sydney.

Fully vaccinated (as this was interpreted at that time) and wearing a mask, I arrived at [REDACTED] at 9 am on 31 August 2021, carrying my sign ('End the Lockdowns'/'NSW=Police State'), and was immediately issued with an infringement notice and 'move on' order. Complying with the latter, I walked up [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with my sign; halfway back I was again confronted by police, engaged in conversation, and issued with a second notice.

The officer in this second encounter did not want to look at my vaccination certificate, surprisingly in view of the supposed 'public health' issues at stake.

The persons gathered in [REDACTED] in the largest numbers on 31 August were NSW Police. It was ironic that the situation to which my sign drew attention, was amply confirmed by police action on the day.

I pleaded guilty to both infringement notices – which together amounted to more than \$6000 in penalties – because I had no witnesses to support my version of events. Thanks to the NSW response to Covid-19, for the first time in my life I was considered a criminal, simply for the 'offence' of peaceful and solitary protest. In the event, a NSW magistrate threw out the notices (as I eventually discovered through viewing the outcomes of court cases online).

### General Issues

For the purposes of this Federal inquiry, the larger issues remain the following:

Following the NSW Government decision to enter lockdown in late June 2021, western and south-western Sydney communities bore the brunt of enforced

unemployment; the forcing onto welfare of productive people; closure of small businesses (e.g. evident along the length of [REDACTED]); police surveillance and harassment of innocent people, including via helicopters; devastating impacts on mental health and relationships; and criminalization of peaceful protest. My protest was a peaceful and silent objection to all these measures.

The situation later in 2021, became far worse, with the prevention of unvaccinated people – or people who could not produce a certificate of vaccination (e.g. an elderly person who struggled with a phone) - from participation in normal life. We saw the sacking of many workers from their jobs, often vital ones, if they had chosen to be unvaccinated. Some, e.g. firefighters, remain – in 2023! – prevented from resuming their employment.

When the story of 2021 is told by journalists and historians, in coming months and years, the authorities responsible for this situation - state premiers (enabled by a complicit federal government) and police acting as their enforcers - will not emerge in a good light. Under Covid-19, both Federal and State governments were complicit in turning Australia – the 'lucky country' – into a kind of dystopia. This inquiry should, if nothing else, ensure that authorities take some responsibility for the disaster; it is unlikely to be able to help the thousands upon thousands who lost their livelihood, their health, and/or their faith in institutions.