

COVID-19 Response Inquiry

Submission by RFI Smith

1. This is an individual submission.
2. The author is a former state public servant with experience in central and operating agencies in several states, including management of emergencies.
3. The submission (and attached paper prepared in November 2020) suggest that official responses to the pandemic made governance during emergencies a matter of continuing significance.
4. The paper argues that for Australia the pandemic had no immediate local precedent. It was a phenomenon external in origin, protean in transmission and community wide in impacts. Coming to grips with it entailed a route march of professional and public controversy.
5. The paper contains two main parts. The first examines crisis governance nationally. The second discusses three cases of problems of internal governance (in New South Wales, Victoria, and the federal government) that allowed the virus to spread rapidly. The paper concludes with a brief examination of continuing issues and implications.
6. It suggests that implications for how governments worked promised to reverberate well beyond the immediate impacts of the pandemic.
7. Although the paper does not cover events beyond 2020 this submission suggests that consideration of governance implications is worthy of the Inquiry's close attention.