

Submission to the Australian Government COVID19 Response Inquiry

Ian [REDACTED] Lees, parents of Katie Margaret Lees (24.9.1986 – 4.8.2021)

Terms of reference we are addressing

This submission addresses three of the terms of reference:

- Key health response measures (TR1)
- Broader health supports for people impacted by COVID19-19 and/or lockdowns (TR2)
- Financial support for individuals (TR3)

Who we are

- We are the parents of Katie Margaret Lees, a 34-year-old writer, actor and performer who died from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine at 5pm Wednesday 4th August 2021. We also represent our three remaining children, Katie's much-loved siblings, [REDACTED]. Katie was a fit and healthy woman who decided to get the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine to do her bit to end the lockdowns imposed on NSW in June 2021. She had no pre-existing medical conditions. Katie did not need the vaccine; she wouldn't have died if she got COVID19. Katie took this action, not because she was worried about getting COVID19, but because she was deeply concerned about the impact of lockdowns on the life of communities and the mental health of individuals. Katie said, 'Human beings cannot be expected to live like this.'
- Katie's immediate family, extended family and wide network of friends are still traumatised by Katie's unnecessary death from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine.
- Thank you for the opportunity share our experience. We believe there are important lessons to be learnt for the future from what we have suffered.

Summary of our experience

The following are the key points from the story of Katie's vaccination and death from the AstraZeneca Vaccine.

Katie has her first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine

- Katie had her first does of the AstraZeneca vaccine on 22nd July 2021 [REDACTED]
- Katie had some headaches and developed a circular rash on the forearm of the arm she got the vaccine in. Despite advice being sent to GPs from NSW Health in early July 2021 about a rash being a sign of adverse reaction to the AZ vaccine, [REDACTED]. The Federal Government's strategy of shifting the issues with the AstraZeneca Vaccine to the primary health carers needs to be called into question if primary health carers were not aware of, or did not implement, advice.

Katie goes by ambulance to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH)

- Katie woke on Sunday 1st August with severe headache and vomiting. She was transported to RPAH via ambulance.
- Katie's brain CT scan showed severe clotting in the Cerebral Vein. The neurosurgeon stated that the location of the clotting indicated that this was caused by AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine. Katie slipped into deep unconsciousness around 3pm and never regained consciousness.
- Despite this catastrophic brain injury, undergoing subsequent neurosurgery and being on life support, due to COVID19 restrictions, we were not permitted to visit Katie until two days after she was admitted as she was still in COVID19 intensive care, even though she tested negative to COVID19.

Katie dies from the AstraZeneca Vaccine

- Just before 5pm on Wednesday 4th August, [REDACTED] and Ian gathered around Katie's ICU bed. Ian gave the signal to the ICU nurse to turn off Katie's life support.
- Katie Margaret Lees was declared dead at 4.59pm on Wednesday 4th August 2021.

No official contact

- Katie's death was reported in one line on a reporting page on the TGA website on Thursday 5th August 2021. This line diluted the cause and effect of the Astra Zeneca COVID19 vaccine on Katie's death to 'a 34-year-old woman in NSW died *following* her first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine'.
- On the same page as listing deaths from the AstraZeneca vaccine, the TGA website continued to say the AstraZeneca vaccine was safe.

- There was no official mention of her death in the daily COVID19 updates.
- No political or health leader initiated any contact with us.

Silence, mockery, discrediting and disbelief continue to this day

The death of our first-born child and eldest daughter from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine has devastated our lives. If that wasn't bad enough, we have endured ongoing PR campaigns, media reporting and commentary by politicians denying, diminishing, and discrediting our experience. Some examples include:

- After Katie died, the NSW Health Minister still declared the AstraZeneca Vaccine 'a perfectly safe vaccine'. The NSW Premier told people to 'not be fussy' about which vaccine they had.
- My experience of the death of my daughter from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine was mocked by the nurse giving me my COVID19 booster.
- Members of our family were assumed to be 'anti-vaxers'.
- Our statements that Katie died from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine were repeatedly questioned, edited out and watered down.
- The Katie Lees Foundation, which we set up in 2023 in Katie's honour to support female writers and performers, was initially required by a funding body to delete the statement that Katie died from the AstraZeneca vaccine because they were a 'pro-vaccination' organisation.
- It took 9 months of approaching media to have our story told as they were concerned about implying there was something wrong with the vaccine.

Documented evidence that Katie died from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine

Katie Margaret Lees died at 5pm on Wednesday 4th August 2021 from vaccine-induced thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (VITTS) caused by the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine. Sadly, it has often been our experience that some people doubt us when we say that Katie died from the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine. To establish this medical fact the evidence base is set out below:

Date	Data source	Cause of death
1 st August 2021	Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Medical Records of Katie Margaret Lees. (Large file – 280 pages available on request.)	Very early identification of the AstraZeneca vaccine as the most likely cause of the severe clotting in the base of Katie's brain. Treatment path assumed this. Cause of death: Vaccine-induced thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome.
1 st August 2021 3 rd August 2021	Senior Intensive Care Unit Doctors and Neurosurgeon verbal reports.	'Katie is dying from the AstraZeneca COVID19 Vaccine'.
6 th August 2021	NSW Vaccine Safety Expert Panel review of the death of Katie Margaret Lees. (attached)	Vaccine-induced thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome.
25 th August 2021	Death Certificate of Katie Margaret Lees. (attached)	Vaccine-induced thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome

Impact of Katie's death from the AstraZeneca Vaccine

Health

- [REDACTED] our remaining adult children, their partners and Ian have been emotionally, mentally and physically traumatised by the way Katie died, the lack of support from Government and the pharmaceutical industry and the alienation we feel from the mainstream narrative in our society.
- [REDACTED] Ian have both been formally diagnosed with [REDACTED] due to the cause and context of Katie's death and the lack of support.
- We have engaged ongoing counselling support at our own expense.

Day to day existence

- Every morning, our first thought is how Katie died and the sinking feeling that we were used and discarded by our Government, by AstraZeneca and by our society.
- This stays with us all day and is the last thought at the end of the day.
- We are trying to get on with life and trying to shape a different life without Katie and with the indifference of our society to her death.

Career and income

- [REDACTED] was a senior executive in a major Sydney hospital but was unable to continue to work in that role due to the mental health impacts of the constant reminders of COVID19 vaccination. This has meant the loss of years of executive level income.
- Ian no longer has the mental and emotional capacity to work full-time in his own business. This has reduced his income earning capacity significantly.
- Our adult children have found it very difficult to sustain work performance and maintain jobs since Katie died.

Social connection

- We continue to feel alienated and discarded from Australian society.
- We remain cynical of government and pharmaceutical industry.
- We have significantly reduced capacity for social engagement.

Our recommendations for government response to future pandemics

Our recommendations, born out of our horrendous and deeply painful experience of our daughter dying from the AstraZeneca vaccine are as follows:

Recommendation #1: Improve vaccine quality

- Ensure vaccines are fully and thoroughly tested before being mandated to be taken by large numbers of the population.
- Ensure vaccines are targeted to those who are at risk of death or disability from COVID19-19, rather than adjusting eligibility criteria to cover those, especially young people not at risk of COVID19-19 side effects, who then incurred an unnecessary risk from the vaccine.
- Ensure a wider range of vaccine options than the Australian government chose during the pandemic.
- Ensure there is a mechanism to rapidly learn from the experience of vaccine safety of other countries to safeguard Australians. Many European countries withdrew or limited the use of the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine by early 2021. We understand Denmark ceased using AstraZeneca in April 2021 and Finland limited it to over 65-year-olds after reports of blood clots. Despite this evidence, on 28th June 2021, the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, declared the AstraZeneca vaccine safe for everyone over the age of 18 years, despite ATAGI increasing the recommended age from 50 to 60.

Recommendation #2: Greater clarity and honesty in communication about the vaccine

- Public statements about the quality, reliability and safety of vaccines should be as clear, direct and honest so that people can make an informed decision. It was not clearly communicated that the AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine only had Provisional Approval when it was released to the Australian community.
- Devise an effective means of communicating the most up to date information to all primary health carers and have a mechanism to ensure this information is acted upon.
- Ensure clarity about what informed consent is in the context of a vaccine that only has provisional approval.

Recommendation #3: Immediate and substantial support for people who suffer the impact of vaccine failure.

- Acknowledgement is the most important and most powerful agent of care and healing. If we had received early contact and acknowledgement from a senior politician or health leader, this would have had a significant impact on our health and our future. Therefore, we recommend the Australian Government issue a National Apology and Recognition for deaths and disabilities suffered as a result of the mandated use of COVID19-19 vaccines that were not fully developed and tested.
- We recommend that a process be set up that enables deaths and severe impacts from vaccine failure to be reported to senior health and political leaders. These health and political leaders should then initiate contact with affected individuals and families to acknowledge the impact of the vaccine failure.
- We strongly recommend a full review of the basis and fairness of the Australian Government Vaccine Compensation scheme including substantial increases in the amounts paid to the loved ones of someone who dies from a government mandated vaccination program. We were verbally informed by a First Assistant Secretary for the Federal Health Department, that the vaccine compensation scheme was based on the NSW Sports Injury Scheme. This is an irrelevant basis of compensation. In the end, the language of Government is money. Words can be supportive but true acknowledgement and support comes through appropriate financial support and offers of psychological support.

Appendices: 1- Death Certificate 2- Letter NSW Health (neither to be published)