

I am an emergency nurse and academic with more than 20 years of nursing experience in Australia. I have taught undergraduate nursing since 2016 at a [REDACTED] I have also recently navigated the aged care system with my Father developing advanced dementia requiring 24/7 care during the COVID19 pandemic. He passed away last year.

My feedback regarding the role that Federal Government and National Cabinet, the AHPPC, the Ministry of Health, and the state health governing bodies is that everyone should be coordinating their approach, so the message is the same from all bodies. The advice should be based on EVIDENCE around airborne precautions and the precautionary principle. I was impressed in 2020 when vaccination clinics were created and pop-up covid testing centres were available at a local level. The vaccine roll out was so stressful though! We could see that other countries were getting access to vaccines and the Morrison government was twiddling its thumbs. It took Rudd to make some calls and a [REDACTED] of the current government to get anything happening. [REDACTED]

Additionally, having sick leave entitlements for COVID19 infections for ALL employees was so important. Tracking and tracing the virus to attempt to control the spread was also imperative. But then decisions were made that got rid of all these excellent mitigation strategies. What happened? Why is all of this gone when people are still getting infected and dying from COVID19?

My experience as a teacher in an old University building has been appalling. There are 30 students per class squeezed into poorly ventilated classrooms full of young adults, our future nursing workforce no less, and we are being told it is an 'individual responsibility'. The windows are either dysfunctional or nailed closed and there are no HEPA filters or other ventilation options such as ceiling fans and tall ceilings to aid in reducing the viral load in classrooms. No students are wearing masks, and neither are any staff.

Then, I leave this work environment to go see my Father in his RACF where I have to don gown, gloves, mask and a face shield as well as complete a RAT before entering to see my deaf Father with dementia! The cognitive dissonance is astounding. I am so grateful that the RACF staff protected my Father so well from COVID19. Who is protecting our university students? The usual response to my emails of concern is that the University executive is following public health advice. This means that the public health advice is putting our future nursing workforce and those who are teaching them at risk of multiple COVID19 infections. Have you seen the long covid statistics? The latest evidence is indicating long term damage with repeated infections. How can you look away from this research? Or how can you read this research and do nothing? The messaging about hand washing instead of mask wearing is so disappointing. Is there no one with enough courage in our government bodies to stand up and report evidence-based advice?

As an emergency nurse I have seen nurse after nurse leave the specialty and the whole profession. There are not enough senior staff left to mentor and teach the new staff. This is causing new staff to report high levels of stress and burnout within the first year of their career. This is unacceptable! The current workforce shortage strategy is to fill a leaking bucket with more and more new graduates or foreign trained nurses with no attempts or

effective strategies to keep the current workforce. Retention strategies must be a priority. Provide PPE that works – N95 masks with fit testing, HEPA filters in the waiting rooms and ward settings, and improvements in ventilation in all healthcare settings.

Regular and consistent health care advice regarding mask wearing indoors and when socialising is paramount with Christmas and holidays coming. Please provide Federal Government advice based on airborne precautions evidence to the public. The hospital system is begging you to help us. So is the education sector. Protect our young people, our nurses, and our communities. This will help us to protect and care for you.