

Support continues for Australian physician and zero-COVID advocate Dr David Berger

Our reporters
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The WSWs continues to receive and publish statements supporting Dr David Berger, an Australian physician and dedicated zero-COVID advocate who is being threatened with deregistration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) over his social media condemnations of the government’s “let it rip” coronavirus policies.

Since the publication of our first article on July 8, which calls on scientists, health workers and other sections of workers to come to Dr Berger’s defence, the WSWs has published sixteen articles, including statements of support.

We urge workers, young people and professionals to speak out in defence of Dr Berger. Statements of support can be emailed here. Please indicate in the email how you would like to be identified in our next article, and if you want to include a photo, please attach one to the email.

Letter from a New South Wales medical specialist:

Dr David Berger has written frequently on Twitter outlining his quite reasonable concerns about repeated and profound governmental and regulatory failures in the management of the COVID pandemic in Australia. Recent sanctions imposed by the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority (AHPRA) on the registration of Dr Berger have been defended by that body as a response to bullying—presumably by Berger, although they are less clear as to whom he has supposedly bullied. Yet within this farce is exposed a special insight into the workings of the medical profession, particularly the tactics used to suppress dissent.

Conformation to a vaguely described “professionalism” is instilled from the earliest days of medical training. Great chunks of time and paper are devoted to the instillation of a Safety Culture—where

patient safety is paramount and where no one is above feedback or question. University courses in medicine pay lip service to empathy and whole weeks are given over to the art of communication. Readers would, I feel, be reassured by this. However, the hierarchical structure of the medical profession means that, in fact, training specialists do the bidding of their consultants, residents of their registrars, and medical students can be—and are—bullied relentlessly.

Dissent is dealt with swiftly—ostracism of colleagues is often sickeningly and rapidly completed. Bodies ostensibly set up to train and represent training doctors are weaponised against them by directors of training, departmental heads and hospital administration. External discussion of hospital bed status, internal hospital conditions or workforce morale are specifically prohibited by the Public Service employment award, and any dealing with journalists is conducted through a hospital media unit, which functions as a censor in all but name.

What we see in the case of Dr Berger’s disciplinary action, and by extension the silencing of the SEP Twitter feed, is *not in the least* surprising to any medical practitioner. Mostly, doctors will be content to look the other way, as we always have done. However, a growing corpus of disaffected and politically aware medicos—as yet tamed by the threat of deregistration and loss of income—will, I am sure, be asking more of our ruling classes and demanding satisfaction for our colleagues and patients.

It will only be by de-mystifying the medical profession and allowing a science-based, evidence-responsive democratisation of the workforce that the people of Australia will be best served by the genuinely caring majority of their doctors.

AHPRA has accused Dr Berger of bullying. It is

somehow deliciously ironic that the definition of bullying in the medical workforce is left to—you guessed it—AHPRA.

Pot. Kettle. Black.

John Thompson, a retired draughtsman from New South Wales:

I support Dr David Berger and his social media condemnation of governments' "let it rip" coronavirus policies. These government policies could easily be renamed to "let them die."

Now, Dr Berger is being threatened with deregistration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. So much for democracy in Australia.

As of 31 July 2022, over 11,000 people in Australia have died from COVID-19. It's clear that the worse the pandemic, the more the Australian government and business moguls, supported by union leaders, are demanding the end of public health mandates.

The policies dictated by billionaires to governments are designed to keep profits flowing with no regard to the health of the community. These policies of "profit before lives" indicate a cold-hearted treatment of humanity as "expendable livestock."

I ask that government lackeys stop victimising Dr. Berger and other zero-COVID campaigners.

Michael, from Perth, Western Australia:

We hear an awful lot about democracy and freedom, but the attack on Dr Berger is anti-democratic; stopping Dr Berger stops people making informed decisions about the pandemic. We're hearing all the time about hospitals being overwhelmed, doctors and nurses who've been in the game for years walking away because they can't cope. But I get the impression around me that people don't know this, even though it makes the odd headline. So, its anti-democratic really.

People in a functioning democracy need to have full access to all sides of the arguments, even if they don't like them, and there's a lot of stuff I don't agree with. But I'm much happier to hear that than to have it shut out.

Dr Berger has got to choose between giving his honest opinion to people and keeping his job. It's wrong; I think he should be heard.

I think it's terrible the mainstream media simply won't publish this, because they've been told not to, essentially.

The argument going back a couple of years ago was that we had to stop people getting infected and we had to try to get down to zero-COVID. And then it was decided, "Oh, hang on a minute, we're not making enough money here, we really need people to be spending and getting out."

The fact that 1,800 doctors signed a petition; that's a lot of doctors. You'd think they'd be obliged to listen to them, at least.

Twitter's ban of the SEP account may be because the SEP has come to the notice of more and more people. They have all the algorithms and everything else that tell them exactly what people are interested in. And of course, they just don't want people to have anything but a negative word about socialism.



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