

COVID vigil participants denounce Australian Labor government's lifting of safety measures

Our reporters
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Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to participants in the vigil held by Australians Against COVID to mark the death of over 16,000 people in the country from COVID-19 and to oppose the "let it rip" policies of the Albanese Labor Government. See the full report on the rally [here](#).

Sasha said, "I am a mother of two children with disability and I live with a spouse who has disabilities. We are not completely locked in at home, but life has become very awkward. Doing shopping and various other things when we have to accommodate the general disabilities, we have to deal also with the risk of COVID. I am very supportive of Sam and Craig and Nicole in their effort to make people more aware of what it is like to be living with a disability in a pandemic.

"I am old enough to remember, if you go back to the seventies, the Slip, Slop, Slap campaigns for protection against the sun, through to the HIV messages that came out. It might have been a bit dramatic, but it did get the message across about what people needed to do to limit their risk. Public health related to COVID has been non-existent. We haven't had public health campaigns. We have had industry rather than public health officials dictating what is happening.

"I've been absolutely surprised how long it took to get vaccines, not from the developmental side, I'm actually amazed at how quickly that happened, but from the perspective of the government being the main body involved in purchasing them for the country. Also, there has been a lack of policy regarding clean air.

"Everything was delayed in Australia. We could see what was happening overseas and we just assumed it

wasn't going to happen here. We really did not listen to the experts; we listened to hairdressers and café people.

"If you look at the Omicron variant, we just let it rip. I don't think anyone really thought about what would happen when they did that. I can't believe our society has allowed that to happen.

"We have here people who are wheelchair bound, or who have disabilities, or cancer patients who are undergoing treatment who cannot access the world as they need to."

Sasha said she was surprised that the Labor government continued the policies of its Liberal-National Coalition predecessor. "I thought that prior to the election campaign Albanese and his ministers were vocal against what the Liberal Party were doing. Yet it seems that they have come in and they have not changed their medical advisors. I find it disgusting some of the things that have been said by the Chief Medical Officer [Paul Kelly]."

Simone, Sasha's 16-year-old daughter, said, "I have friends who have had COVID six times now and one of them has a foggy memory and she is struggling to focus in school. It's not just affecting older people. We are sixteen, we shouldn't have to have our entire future put at risk because of a preventable pandemic. We thought we were safe but we were basically being lied to, so people went out and now they are struggling.

"All of my friends come in sick and the next thing you know half the school is gone. I have walked into classrooms where there have been about ten people when there is supposed to be thirty. As soon as one person comes in sick, the next week everyone is gone. Because they are not wearing masks, they come in and they spread it to everyone."

Simone does wear a mask to school but she said “I’ve seen about five people in my entire school of 1,000 people wear a mask.”

She added, “I’ve been saying that schools are a breeding ground. How does the public assess the risk when they don’t actually know what is happening? You need evidence to make a determination of risk and all the data has been withdrawn from the public space. I am horrified that people are being sent into the world without protection. The state governments, backed by the federal government, are withdrawing information to the public. I think that is horrific. Where are the policies to instigate better air in public spaces? Where are the guidelines to tell people what to do if they are attending an event with more than 20 people to help limit the spread of the disease?”

Natalia Bateman, a science communicator at Australian National University, said it was “puzzling and very heartbreaking” that the Labor government removed isolation requirements for COVID positive people. “They put all the responsibility onto the people, which is impossible, leaving you with the only thing left to protect you and the ones you love being a mask. All the lines of protection have been taken away, which is appalling.

“In the election, Albanese said he would bring everyone with him, and would support poor people, people who are vulnerable. Suddenly the abandonment of all safety measures was a shock. You were expecting that from the Liberal Party, at least they are transparent in what they say!

“I feel we need to create a society where solidarity is fundamental. I have been sad to see science communicators and scientists not following the scientific evidence. I can’t believe there are scientific events going on all over the world that become super spreader events! If we don’t listen to the scientific experts, then we are going to continue with this problem for more years. But eventually they have to go to a path with places that are ventilated, I think. We could have avoided 16,000 deaths.”

Natalia said she supported the Global Inquest into COVID-19 launched by the *World Socialist Web Site* and said it is “the way to go. It is important to hear from the people who know how this works and I don’t understand why the media isn’t interviewing them.”



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