

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to your email to Professor Chris Blyth of the Institute on 15 November inviting him to make a submission to the above Inquiry and am pleased to respond on his behalf.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee. The WCVID Centre is a part of the Telethon Kids Institute, WA's largest research institution. As a research organisation focussed on the health and wellbeing of children, we emphasise that children need to be prioritised in decision making for their unique needs, risks and impacts during a pandemic. This is a key area that needs to be examined in the Royal Commission. We therefore recommend that the Terms of Reference examine the extent to which the needs of children were prioritised and the extent to which the pandemic impacted children and families.

In relation to the terms of reference (TOF) for a Royal Commission into COVID-19, the Centre believes that the TOF be fulsome in their scope to properly understand what was done well and what could be improved in the future, and how we might be able to use this information to navigate ongoing challenges of living with COVID and for future pandemic preparedness. We would particularly recommend that the TOF include the capacity to examine:

- the extent to which the research sector was able to work effectively with Government to provide advice and evidence to policy makers;
- the extent to which the best scientific evidence, using the extraordinary research capability we have nationally, was used to make decisions that impacted the community;
  - the conditions that are needed in Australian healthcare settings to enable research to add the value that is needed in the midst of a pandemic
- how to improve community engagement, including with First Nations people and those from CALD communities, to ensure community voices properly informed decision making;
- whether greater cooperation and data sharing between State and Federal Governments might have improved outcomes;
- how to introduce greater collaboration between the research sector and health services to better improve outcomes;
- how better coordination at all levels of Government and with other sectors can be implemented to streamline effective decision making in a time critical and high pressure environment; and
- how to ensure there is greater workforce readiness and agility in the health and research sectors to respond to future pandemics,
- how to ensure the "right" people (with the skills and expertise needed) are able to be brought together quickly to achieve the best outcomes; with appropriate development opportunities for future leaders to observe, interact and plan for succession to keep the workforce energised, replete and not key person dependent.
- Early mobilisation of funds e.g. grants funding (and expedited peer review) to support research activities to progress in a timely manner.
- Funding investment to build critical, sustainable research infrastructure (such as clinical trial centres in each state/territory nested within a coordinated, clinical trials/research network)

in order to foster opportunities for collaboration, ensure equity in research participation and to improve research efficiency and the cost-effectiveness of research activities. It is recommended that such an undertaking be planned in collaboration with key research organisations, including the Australian Clinical Trials Alliance (ACTA). There is precedent for such a model (the United Kingdom), with clear evidence of the benefits of investing in a coordinated approach.

- Investment in innovative data solutions/infrastructure e.g. Electronic Medical Record in WA to allow research to be embedded in routine practice to create 'learning health systems' to inform practice and policy.

We would be pleased to engage further on this matter and will make a submission to the inquiry in due course.

Yours sincerely,  
Shadie Rezazadeh