

Dear Committee Members

I make this submission as a lay person. I do not understand statistics. What I do know is that we should not be lied to as members of the public and we should not have numbers massaged. I do know that statistics are complicated and choices are made on inclusions or otherwise at various points. However, from the lay person's perspective, there are points I would like to raise for consideration.

From my very brief analysis of the ABS figures I have found it easy to find the excess mortality reports, and found them easy to read and mostly clear in the information. For example, I found that, "141,116 doctor certified deaths occurred between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2020 and were registered by 28 February 2021. This equates to an average of 385.6 deaths per day, in line with the baseline average of 385.8." (source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/jan-dec-2020> ). As lay person I deduce that in 2020 we had the normal number of deaths.

A year later, there is a change to the way data is presented and now there is a summary of: "this is 8,517 deaths (5.7%) more than the 2015-19 average and 7,151 deaths (5.0%) more than in 2020." (source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/jan-2020-dec-2021#australian-deaths-by-week-30-december-2019-to-2-january-2022> ). Again though, as a lay person I understand this is showing me that there are differences in the increase in mortality, but is clearly showing there was an unexpected increase in mortality.

However, in this report, 2020 data is combined with 2021 data for reasons that are stated but unclear to a lay person such as myself. But what is clear is that during 2021, the data was altered in the way it was recorded: "As mortality during 2020 had periods where deaths were significantly lower than expected, 2020 has not been included in the baseline average." (source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/jan-2020-jan-2021> ). By combining 2020 and 2021 data to create a baseline for the annual figures for 2021 the ABS has clearly altered the way comparisons across years can be made.

Then in September of 2022, "In 2022, there were 92,699 deaths that occurred by 30 June and were registered by 31 August, which is 13,524 (17.1%) more than the historical average." (source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/jan-jun-2022>) and yet the 2020 data is not included. This may well be for good statistical reasons but for the lay person it is unclear how numbers can be included or not based on choice. In particular it becomes very confusing when for the end of 2022 report, 2020 is back being included in the numbers: "In 2022, there were 190,394 deaths that occurred by 31 December and were registered by 28 February 2023, which is 25,235 (15.3%) more than the historical average." (source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/jan-dec-2022>). By including the 2020 numbers again did it lower the excess mortality from the 17.1% where it was in June? Or was it that the back end of 2022 was less excessive in deaths than the first half?

Additionally, it is confusing about how COVID-19 deaths are reported. For example, the ABS uses COVID -19 caused deaths (source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes->

[death/provisional-mortality-statistics/latest-release#data-downloads](https://www.health.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/latest-release#data-downloads)) and the Department of Health (source: <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/covid-19/reporting# covid19-associated-deaths>) uses the term associated deaths. Given death is a simple matter of asking what killed you, surely the COVID-19 deaths should be reported as “people who died from having COVID-19 because they had nothing else”.

I understand how reporting death can be murky. My mother technically died of renal failure as that was what finally killed her. But reason she had renal failure was the cancer that had been present in her body for the previous four years. So when people asked me what my mother died of, I say cancer, not renal failure. Surely the same should be said of COVID-19? If someone has cancer and then gets COVID-19 and that’s what kills them, didn’t they actually die of the cancer as that is what made them susceptible?

I raise this in relation to point (c) in the terms of reference as COVID-19 is being highlighted as an issue in the mortality statistics as it appears in the third dot point of the figures (source: [source: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/latest-release#data-downloads](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/provisional-mortality-statistics/latest-release#data-downloads)). This emphasises COVID-19 as a concern, and yet it is 0.03% of the figures. Why is COVID-19 being highlighted as an issue in the mortality figures? Is it a drive of excess mortality? Why is there emphasis placed?

I take this opportunity to make this submission to ask this Committee to seek clarity on the reporting of deaths in this country. I ask this because an experimental vaccine was used in this country (source: <https://www.tga.gov.au/products/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>) and now we have a blurring of the reporting of what deaths are actually. Clarity and transparency is necessary for democracy. Please take steps to explain to Australians exactly what is going on for our people.

Kind regards

Mel Timpson