

## Inquiry into the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Ms Lucinda Baulch

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### YOUR SUBMISSION

#### **Submission:**

I attended the Freedom Day event of 3rd November in Melbourne and I witnessed Police brutality. Police were aggressive even violent and many arrests were intimidating to witness and an extremely excessive use of force.

Police pushed us together until we were all touching each other with no where to go (and then fined us for breaking CHO directives of being in a group of greater than 10 people! I attended with 1 person and was not in a group of greater than 10 until police pushed us together). They held us for several hours with a tight ring of police not allowing anyone to leave until they had arrested or fined each of the people present.

I witnessed peaceful people in conversation with the people next to them have a group of police come up behind them and by surprise grab them by the head and neck ultimately yanking their necks forward so their heads were thrown back and dragging them away by the neck. Totally disproportionate use of force.

Police attitudes and behaviour were intimidating. I witnessed several people trapped in the crowd by police breakdown in tears fearful of the police and the situation they were in.

Of great concern to me was refusal of police to allow people who needed it to get medical attention. The police had sprayed some of the crowd with pepper spray and were not allowing those people any treatment or relief. One woman I was helping hadn't been sprayed directly by police but someone who had been sprayed brushed past her (the police packed us so tight there was no avoiding touching each other) and the pepper spray transferred to her arm, skin and into her eyes. Myself and those around me were appealing to police for help for those who needed medical attention. In a couple of instances an officer or 2 were going to allow these individuals to leave for medical attention but the senior officers intervened preventing these people from leaving to get help. One senior officer stating 'you decided to protest you can wait until you are arrested'. In two instances that I am aware of we the people called ambulances forcing the hand of the police to allow these people to leave for medical help!! One man was starting to have breathing difficulties and the senior officers were not interested in him getting help thankfully the ambulance we called arrived and he was allowed to leave!

Also concerning was two deaf people in the group being held by police couldn't hear the police instructions and wrote a message on their phone saying they were deaf and could the officers please explain to them what had been said. The senior officer refused to go to them to read their message, so I took the phone to him. He refused to read it saying no comment and he wasn't interested. So I read the message out to him and he again

said I'm not interested and no comment! I asked him if there was an interpreter and weren't they entitled to an interpreter he said no they would find out when they got arrested!!

Individual police officers that I dealt with especially when being processed for a fine were reasonable and good to deal with as was I. I had no intention of causing trouble and was calm and respectful. But the overall police tactics were brutal and excessive and preventing political freedom of speech. It is a very sad time when our police support government and have stopped protecting the people.

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**Signature:**

Lucinda