



Media Release

The Rule of Law Institute of Australia calls upon the Federal Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the Victorian hotel quarantine programme which led to the death of 800 Australians.

The Victorian inquiry into the program has issued an interim report and recommendations on what should happen in the future but has not yet issued a report on who was responsible for the failings. The responsibility for the failings may be with the Victorian government, officials, bureaucrats, or private contractors. At this stage, no judgement can be made, but there has been extensive criticism of the Victorian government which appears to be justified.

The Inquiry itself has also been subject to criticism which has centred on the alleged 'soft' treatment of Government witnesses and the failure to call essential witnesses, such as Lizzie Ratcliff, David Millward and Andrew McLean. It is critical that the Inquiry is not seen as a bogus Victorian Government inquiry into itself.

COVID-19 is a national problem which knows no state borders. The disease operates regardless of Victorian or state borders. Australians need to have confidence that any weaknesses or errors in our defence against Covid - 19 are investigated, remedied and any government official, no matter how senior, is transparently and fairly brought to account. Only a Federal Royal Commission would have the powers, resources and time to do this.

The Institute does not believe for one moment that the head of the Inquiry would not follow proper process in an attempt to get to the bottom of the failings. However, a point has now been reached where there is a need for the appointment of someone seen to be independent of those whom the inquiry is investigating to be nominated. Only a Royal Commission appointed by the Federal Government will have the power to access phone records, resources, time and above all the credibility to achieve this end.

Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done

Malcolm Stewart
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