

Mr Chris Field
Ombudsman Western Australian
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We are submitting this to you in the interest of Western Australian travellers as they attempt to maintain contact with loved ones, or simply to keep Australia's economy moving.

My recent experience in departing and returning from and to Australia has demonstrated the complete disconnect between the Politicians, on the one hand, and some of our Bureaucrats on the other.

The topic for discussion at the international conference I attended was "Rising from the Crisis", where the 300 delegates from 30 different countries had an opportunity to compare the effectiveness of each country's response to the major crisis facing the world today.

Evidence indicated that governments wielding the 'big stick – Coronavirus Heavy Penalties', resulted in a dramatic reduction in their level of civil society.

Those countries, at the other end of the scale, where politicians exhibit humility and make information available for each individual, to ensure they can make the best and most appropriate decisions for themselves, their loved-ones and workforce, inevitably resulted in a more caring society where genuine concern was obvious.

Until I showed them written evidence, no one believed that it is also an offence to fail to comply with the COVID-19 emergency management Directions issued by the WA Government in relation to self-isolation, quarantine, gatherings, activities, access to places and travel. The maximum penalty if you are dealt with by a court is 12 months imprisonment and a fine of \$50,000 – *Ref: Legal Aid Western Australia –*
<https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au/get-legal-help/covid-19-how-we-can-help/covid-19-legal-information/covid-19-criminal-offences#:~:text=It%20is%20also%20an%20offence,and%20a%20fine%20of%20%2450%2C000>

Talking of the disconnect between the Political and Bureaucratic, which was so severe that the disrespect that either exhibit towards their own citizens has led me to prepare this detailed 'blow-by-blow' submission to you as W.A. State Ombudsman, in the hope that it causes 'a few well-deserved waves'.

Both the politicians and the bureaucrats should be reminded, in stentorian tones, that the few legitimate roles of government do not include treating their own citizens as dog's droppings! Please excuse the language but the English language is incapable of explaining the current situation which has left me with very little respect for those who we hire, to care for us.

**Politicians and Bureaucrats, like WWII Bombers, seldom see their victims.
(A G2G Travel Pass, does not mean Good to Go!)**

They 'fly overhead' drop their bombs or make their announcements and fly home in time for lunch or a game of golf. (Only the Bombers faced any danger, as these days the worst that can happen to a bureaucrat is to be 'suspended on full pay'.)

If governing were more like infantry service and less like bombing runs: i.e., if politicians witnessed first-hand all the suffering and anguish unleashed every time, they 'change the rating of severity of Covid results', they would be less enthusiastic about their daily announcements. (This concept is explored further at <https://fee.org/articles/losing-touch/>)

Each time they make their announcements there are thousands of G2G Applications automatically cancelled with a text or email.

This requires the tedious task of re-loading your life's history to re-apply (no details are retained from earlier applications).

If you are 'locked up' in a Medi-Hotel quarantine for two weeks, in a remote capital city, how do you locate your latest Telstra or Energy account to prove your State of Residence?

How does the Western Australian Government manage to offload its Medi-Hotel quarantine responsibilities to other capital cities when all other cities are totally overloaded with their own responsibilities?

Why did I have to pay a predatory priced Qantas (3-hour) flight from Adelaide to Perth (about the same price as I used to pay for an Around the World ticket)?

A bunch of us, on the quarantine coach from the Adelaide Airport to our Medi-Hotel lock-up, had the presence of mind to exchange contact numbers and form a *WhatsApp* Group so that we could compare notes during our two weeks quarantine.

Sharing these stories caused me to ask, "How do we, as proud independent Australians, just go along meekly and accept that getting no answers to our numerous telephone calls should be regarded as normal?" It reminds me of a Clive James comment, years ago, when he said that Australia's problem was not so much that many of us descended from convicts but, that too many of us are descendants of jailers, and we have adopted that mentality.

Mr Ombudsman, please bear with me as I go through my experience step-by-step. My sympathy is with those less fortunate than myself, who are unable to ask a political favour to manufacture and drop their own 'bomb' on the bureaucrats to blast their way through this tortuous system.

The 'system' contains many people at ground level who are trying to help, but their roles are rendered 'impossible' by the constant rule changes from above.

I suspect that the higher echelon may be unaware of the burden they are placing on their operational staff.

My personal experience commenced with several unanswered emails to:

- Vaccine Commander Chris Dawson
 - Sept. 6, 2021
 - Oct. 20, 2021 – copies of these emails are attached.

I urgently needed a reply on the reasons for my hotel quarantine being in Adelaide and not in Perth (my hometown).

My E.A., Judy Carroll, followed up with a personal email to Kate Sugars, of Commander Dawson's office, but that too was unanswered.

When we received no reply to either of these three emails, we copied them all to the Deputy Premier's office on Oct. 27th. '22 and requested an answer to my question, "Why Adelaide?"

The Deputy Premier replied five weeks later, on Dec. 6th '22, which was, of course, too late to be of any use.

We lodged G2G Applications four times.

I attempted the first one, the second by my E.A., (twice) and, finally our experienced Travel Agent whose speciality is getting Australians back to Australia.

The first three applications were approved and subsequently cancelled each time the Premier changed the 'ratings'.

My final attempt, lodged in plenty of time by my Travel Agent to receive approval prior to my scheduled return flight, appeared to get 'lost in the system'.

I phoned the G2G number, daily, with calls either ringing out or politely being told to 'take your turn, as we are busy'.

Then, as there had been no response, by the commencement of the day preceding my departure, I cranked up the pressure and started asking for names and demanded action. I was told, "That they may not get back to me in time as their office closes at 6.00 p.m. (Perth time), reopening at 8.00 a.m. the following day. This would have been about an hour after my scheduled flight was due to arrive in Perth. However, they further suggested, "I could wait at the airport and continue my discussion with them then or just take my chances and, get on the plane with no G2G approval but work something out upon arrival in Perth."

None of these options were acceptable and I was not enjoying being treated like the proverbial dog's droppings. This saw a deterioration in my polite and civil approach to the matter as this was certainly not getting me anywhere.

Then, at about 10.00 p.m. (Adelaide time), I received an email to advise that my G2G pass had been refused! That is about when I lost my temper (actually, only the second time in my whole life) and I 'called in the previously mentioned political favour'. This resulted in a bomb being dropped on our Vaccine Commander.

I received a brief telephone call to advise that the Sergeant in Charge of G2G would call me within ten minutes to resolve the matter.

Sergeant Laurie Ware [REDACTED] did call to say that the matter had been resolved and I would receive an approval within the next few minutes. I ask him if there were any other 'handy hints' he could give me about arriving in Perth. He suggested that I ask for all the Schedule 1 Rules to be removed from my arrival forms.

I enquired how that could be done so easily and was given to understand that "these rules are unenforceable anyway and are just left as the default position to give us maximum control." These rules were duly removed upon my arrival in Perth, and I was able to meet my scheduled commitments of that day.

I am grateful for the efficient manner in which Sergeant Ware solved this problem but why did it take a crisis to get this matter resolved?

Again, I mention that the purpose of me lodging this complaint is in the hope that it improves the general level of service so that other citizens will not be treated in this disgraceful manner.

As evidence that I am not entirely an unreasonable person I attach a copy of my letter of thanks to the Quarantine Hotel Manager.

Incidentally, from my subsequent investigations, I have found serious conflicts between our Health Department (who have been given the responsibility of advising our government) and the Police Department who insist on total control. This has been suggested several times as a contributing factor to the overall dysfunctional nature of the operations.

Having put this matter in your hands, for consideration, I look forward to our further discussion and assistance in developing a better way forward.

Regards,



Ron Manners AO
Chairman
Mannwest Group Pty Ltd

Attachments:

- 20/10/21 *Email to Mr Chris Dawson from Ron Manners*
- 20/10/21 *Email to Kate Sugars from Judy Carroll*
- 27/10/21 *Email to W.A. Police*
- 27/10/21 *Email to Deputy Premier from Ron Manners*
- 06/12/21 *Email from Deputy Premier to Ron Manners*
- 09/12/21 *Letter to Hotel Grand Chancellor from Ron Manners*
- 11/12/21 *Article by Janet Albrechtsen 'The Australian'*

These attachments can viewed [HERE](#)