

18 January 2024

Ms Robyn Kruk AO  
Panel Chair  
COVID-19 Response Inquiry

Dear Ms Kruk

### **NSW Ombudsman submission to COVID-19 Response Inquiry**

I am writing to provide a very brief submission to the COVID-19 Response Inquiry.

The NSW Ombudsman is an independent integrity body that pursues fairness for the people of NSW. In particular, we strive to ensure that those entrusted with state public power and resources fulfil their responsibilities and treat everyone fairly.

My office does not oversight the actions of the Commonwealth government and I appreciate the Inquiry will not consider 'actions taken unilaterally by state and territory governments'. However, I do note the Inquiry [Terms of Reference](#) cover the following among other matters:

- governance matters including the responsibilities of state governments
- key health response measures including vaccinations and quarantine facilities (aspects of the administration of which were the responsibility of the state government in NSW)
- mechanisms to better target future responses to the needs of particular populations.

Please find attached copies of two COVID-19 related reports tabled by my office in NSW Parliament.

- **Attachment 1** – [2020 hindsight: the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) – 22 March 2021

In this report we considered the first 12 months of the pandemic, primarily through the lens of the complaints we received. The report looked at a range of issues including: different experiences of groups of people (eg inmates and detainees, residents of boarding houses, young people in out of home care); complaints about the NSW mandatory hotel quarantine system; and the challenges of oversight during COVID-19.

- **Attachment 2** – [The COVID-19 pandemic: second report](#) – 7 September 2022

In this report we considered complaints we received since our March 2021 report. The report showed that the number of COVID-related complaints to the Ombudsman rose significantly in the second year of the pandemic. The report looked at a range of issues in addition to those covered by the first report, including complaints about vaccines and complaints about education and student placements.

Each of the above reports included a chronology of COVID-19 related legislative amendments and public health orders in NSW.

I am providing these reports as they may be of use to the Inquiry to the extent they consider matters outlined above, in addition to any other matters the Independent Panel may find relevant.

Please contact [REDACTED], Executive Strategy Officer at [REDACTED] if you require further information about my office or this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Miller  
**NSW Ombudsman**