



If Lockdowns ‘Work’, Cut Fat Cats’ Pay

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Last month, ABC News [reported on the results of a survey of 1157 Victorians](#) conducted in September last year. Those results have just been [published in the \*Journal of Psychiatric Research\*](#), but amid the exhaustive (and exhausting) media coverage of the coronavirus crisis have barely rated a mention. It is to the credit of the ABC the survey received any attention at all.

During September 2020, 9.5 per cent of respondents to the survey reported having seriously considered suicide in the previous 30 days; 33.4 per cent of respondents reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, and 12.3 per cent of respondents reported starting or increasing their use of substances to manage their emotions.

Those results are the other side of the glib slogan “lockdowns work”. Based on US research that compares American states with and without lockdowns, the truthfulness of the slogan is questionable.

But even if, for the sake of argument, it is accepted the lockdowns “work” to prevent the spread of



a virus for which the average age of death is 85, it also needs to be accepted that lockdowns “work” to prevent the functioning of a civilised and humane society. Lockdowns “work” like malnutrition “works” for weight loss.

Admittedly the survey doesn’t compare the the mental health condition of Victorians last year with pre-pandemic levels, but it is a revealing snapshot of the wellbeing of Victorians.

But what numerous other studies have found is that lockdowns cause a massive deterioration in the mental health of the population, with children left to suffer the worst consequences.

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Australia’s Baby Boomers haven’t just stolen the wealth of their children and grandchildren with the imposition of debt that will not be paid off for generations, if ever. Those Boomers have denied young Australians years of education and work, and years of living as young Australians should feel entitled to live.

Eventually it will dawn on young Australians what’s been done to them, and the calls for Baby Boomers to at the very least pay inheritance taxes and a capital gains tax on the family home will grow louder.

Without engaging in identity politics, it is worth noting that many of the advocates for “harsh”, “strict” and “strong” lockdowns are [middle-aged white men with guaranteed incomes as academics](#).

Whether as academics, public servants or politicians, so many of the people making the decisions about the lives and livelihoods of millions of other Australians will, at least in a financial sense, be personally unaffected by the edicts they issue.

Which is why the reported comments of NSW Treasurer Dominic Perrottet revealed in this newspaper a few weeks ago are so significant. Perrottet is reported to have suggested to [the state’s Chief Health Officer, Kerry Chant, she take a 5 per cent pay cut](#) if Sydney or its surrounds were unnecessarily locked down.

“It is believed Mr Perrottet felt public servants insulated from the financial consequences of their prescribed lockdowns should feel the financial pain experienced by hard-hit small business and private sector workers during the lockdowns.”

According to a NSW government source, “Mr Perrottet had six children and better understood the impost the lockdowns impose on families because of school closures, home learning and mental health challenges. In comparison, several of Mr Perrottet’s senior colleagues did not have children and had not experienced the challenges of locking down children.”

If Perrottet did in fact suggest this, the only problem with it is that it didn’t go far enough. *All senior*



public servants and politicians should take a pay cut matching that suffered by private sector workers – which, depending on how it is calculated, would be between 5 per cent and 20 per cent .

A poll commissioned by the Institute of Public Affairs last year found that 74 per cent of Australians agreed with the statement that politicians and public servants earning more than \$150,000 a year should have their salaries reduced by 20 per cent.

Unfortunately for all those Australians who believe politicians should be discussing in public questions such as whether lockdowns “work” and whether public servants should take pay cuts, both Chant and Perrottet have said they have “no recollection” of any such comment.

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