

Ballarat 4 – 30 April 2020

Restrictions? How One Commentator Sees Them as Further Evidence That Australians Have Been Hoodwinked. The case of Andrew Bolt.

For the most part this is going to focus on Andrew Bolt, NewsCorp pundit, but other media columnists have, for a range of reasons, been sceptical of lockdown restrictions in Australia. They are not necessarily saying that we should all get back to the office now, hit the beaches (or in parts of Victoria, go skiing, if the current cold blasts continue) or abandon social distancing, but relax, for goodness sake. Open schools, play golf, go fishing and errggh well, yes, let's get back to work. While protecting the vulnerable. Or nor even that.

So prelude to Bolt.

When did it start? Probably just as the first social restrictions came into place. Then it was economists such as Ross Gittins and Jessica Irvine, who writing in the *Melbourne Age*, offered dire predictions that it was no use going into lockdown if the economy was going to crash. Gittins' article of 11 March in the *Age* I found particularly distasteful as well as stupid with an argument that meandered all over the place. Under the heading 'Virus Overreaction big fear', Gittins gave us some unsubstantiated blether that the virus 'will end up killing quite a few oldies' but really it was only frightening because it was new. And the media only latched onto it because it was a novelty. Road accidents might kill more than the virus in 2020, and, of course, there's that ubiquitous irrelevance that flu kills a lot of people each year, but we don't worry about that much. Which is as close to a lie as you might get in a newspaper column. Perhaps just ignorance of the massive public awareness campaigns about flu vaccination in recent years. Perhaps too, wilful oversight. Gittins seems to have gone relatively quiet since then. Fellow economist, Jessica Irvine, was less flippant in the same newspaper on 19 March but she too warned about dire effects on the economy and, in passing, noted several times how stressed she was with small children at home. And needed wine. And generally drew attention away from the health authorities trying to do something practical.

But as I said before this is really about Bolt, and for any US readers of this document, he is a right-wing, permanently agitated, commentator for a NewsCorp newspaper and NewsCorp

television. Just a little more context, and then I am just going to present selected highlights from his pieces and leave you to judge. An edited primary source then. In Australia, currently the number of new cases is very low and our death toll stands at 92. This is held by most as a sign that the restrictions across the community combined with natural advantages are, in a phrase we are tired of, ‘flattening the curve.’. And what are these natural advantages?: we’re a dirty great big island, miles from anywhere else, we have first world health services, largely provided via a nationalised system, we have a strong tradition of a quick and co-ordinated reaction to a health emergency, as in the case of AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s, the country is huge and our cities have very low population ratios compared to most. But success so far can be seen AS EVIDENCE THERE WAS NEVER GOING TO BE A PROBLEM. We are now with Andrew Bolt. To wit:

All quotes are from the Melbourne *Herald Sun*, <https://www.heraldsun.com.au>

1 April 2020: ‘When politicians saw hundreds of Italians dying each day from coronavirus they panicked and thought we headed the same way.’

3 April 2020: ‘The Prime Minister and premiers have told us the coronavirus restrictions that have put businesses in ‘hibernation’ and people into isolation will last six months. They can’t be serious.’

7 April 2020: ‘JUST 100 NEW CASES YESTERDAY

Five and a half more months of these destructive bans? When will politicians drop this mad plan?’

9 April 2020: ‘Fallout from bans could be worse than the virus . . . we must accept our restrictions are working and gradually start easing them. If not, we will pay a horrendous price in jobs, money and freedom.’

12 April 2020: [On the Victorian Premier extending the period of restrictions for another month] ‘But another month of emergency powers, and house arrest for all? How easy it to strip a cowed population of their liberties.’

17 April 2020: ‘WHAT’S THE EXCUSE NOW FOR KEEPING US LOCKED UP?’

17 April:2020: ‘Lockdown Lunacy – Australia’s coronavirus curve is as flat as a pancake, with thousands of empty intensive care beds and a death toll a fraction of what was predicted, so why are we still living in an oppressive police state?’

21 April 2020: 'YOU ARE FED RUBBISH STATS TO PANIC YOU ABOUT THIS VIRUS'

27 April 2020: 'Turning Australia into a massive leftist state in response to the coronavirus panic'

30 April 2020: 'I'M FRIGHTENED OF MY GOVERNMENT AND ITS CORONAVIRUS LAWS: For the first time in my life, I am frightened by my government. The coronavirus panic has made it irrational and threatening.'

30 April 2020: 'Warmists using virus to push climate agenda. Global warmists are using the coronavirus catastrophe to preach about building a greener world from the ashes of the economies we're destroying with crippling bans. We can't let this panic bite us twice.'