

A parliament that doesn't want to lock down millions of people for 270 days could be viewed as breaking international law under the WHO proposals.

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World Health Organisation director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus delivers a speech.

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If you thought Australia's response to the Covid-19 pandemic was proportionate, rational and cost-effective, you'll be happy to know you could experience it all over again, in the not-too-distant future, whether Australians want it or not.

“When the next pandemic comes knocking – and it will – we must be ready to answer decisively, collectively and equitably,” said World Health Organisation director-general Tedros Ghebreyesus in Switzerland last week, warning world leaders to expect a disease more deadly than Covid-19 in the coming years.

Despite scant evidence the draconian measures introduced in developed nations slowed the spread of Covid-19, let alone passed any cost-benefit analysis, the WHO is on the brink of assuming vast new powers to dictate

the public health response to future pandemics. An obscure document called the International Health Regulations – which, according to the WHO website, “provides an overarching legal framework that defines countries” – is about to be updated for the first time since the SARS outbreak in 2005.

The document is binding for the 196 member countries, including Australia, and is akin to international law. Thus far, countries have vastly more rights than obligations, but that could change next year when some 300 amendments are voted on in May.

It is remarkable [these proposals](#), which are laid out in detail publicly, have received so little attention given their extraordinary scope. The existing framework says the WHO must make decisions with “full respect for the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons”. This now could be replaced with a more vague reference to “the principles of equity, inclusivity (and) coherence”.

But at least that’s understandable, given the human rights of free movement, speech and commerce clearly meant very little during the Covid pandemic, as nations rode roughshod over traditional liberties, even in states such as Victoria, which had a legislated human rights Act.

“Other amendments propose to delete the word ‘non-binding’ from the definitions of both ‘standing recommendations’ and ‘temporary recommendations’,” the WHO says in its summary document. The word “may” is replaced with “shall” throughout the document where the WHO gives “advice” to governments.

A parliament somewhere that doesn’t want to lock down millions of people for 270 days over a bad cold? That could be viewed as breaking international law.

And it gets worse: the threshold for declaring an emergency and issuing health orders to member states would be changed from a need to avert “public health risks” to “all risks with a potential to impact public health”.

Bureaucrats, whose job it is to find public health risks, will naturally have a bias to find them.

“If you don’t want to live in a sort of international fascist state you should be fairly worried,” said David Bell, an Australian scientist who worked for eight years at the WHO. “The amendments (will) place the WHO as having rights overriding that of individuals, erasing the basic principles developed after World War II regarding human rights and the sovereignty of states,” Bell told *The Australian*, adding that the proposals are “strange and alarming”.

Governments could be compelled to provide information to the WHO, which could also require members to share any intellectual property related to disease prevention with other member states.

The aim of the WHO, according to the International Health Regulations document, should be “the highest achievable” health protection rather than “the appropriate” level.

Under the proposals, governments will be required to “counter the dissemination of false and unreliable information about public health events ... in the media, social networks and other ways”. While these proposals are shocking, such recommendations are in keeping with what actually occurred throughout 2020 and 2021, when the costs of lockdown and vaccine mandates were ignored, and supposedly democratic governments censored citizens in partnership with social media companies.

Indeed, in a recent hearing in Senate estimates, Emergency Management Minister Murray Watt said he was “comfortable” with digital censorship, which was a “really good thing”, following revelations the Department of Home Affairs had worked with Twitter to remove tweets critical of masks and mandates.

The proposed changes “would have absolute dictatorial powers going all the way down through your national legal systems to give orders to your primary care physicians on how you should be treated”, Francis Boyle, a professor of law at the University of Illinois College of Law, tells *The Australian*.

“I’ve analysed just about every treaty and international organisation the United States has been involved in since the first Hague peace conference of 1899, and I have not read anything as totalitarian as these amendments.”

It's easy to dismiss the proposed IHR changes as bureaucratic gobbledygook, which would be ignored in an emergency, especially by large nations such as the US, with codified inalienable human rights. Yet even in the US the Bill of Rights was suspended. In a judgment last week, US Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch decried this move as one of "the greatest intrusions on civil liberties in the peacetime history of this country".

"Governors and local leaders imposed lockdowns ... shuttered businesses and schools, public and private ... closed churches even as they allowed casinos and other favoured businesses to carry on," he said. If the US and Australia sign up to the new IHRs next year, proponents of failed, extremist health measures will have another powerful argument to encourage compliance: international law.

"This is an attempt to make sure that in the next pandemic we'll have no alternative but to comply, and the full authority of the United States federal government will come down upon state and local governments, democratically elected officials," Boyle said.

The great variety of responses across US states to Covid-19, which ultimately demonstrated the costly futility of masks and lockdowns, couldn't occur again.

Unless the measures imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the way they were introduced, are condemned as a mistake made in a panic, we will have passed a turning point in Western history, one that has ushered in a more intrusive, utilitarian, even totalitarian system of government throughout liberal democracies.

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[these proposals](#)



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An anti-lockdown protestor is removed by police during the Remembrance Day service at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Andrew Henshaw



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