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### **'Flying high again!'**

International airlines have been paralysed since March 2020 and all flights except those for repatriation indefinitely suspended. It is estimated for example that there are approximately 40,000 Australians still stranded overseas, many of whom have lost their jobs or accommodation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and are facing serious hardship. This situation is faced by countries and their citizens all over the world.

But it doesn't have to be this way! As professional engineers who are very good at problem solving, once 'track and trace', vaccines and quarantines are available, along with a system to keep track of this information in real time, flights and a relatively normal life should be able to resume.

With a grant from the UK Government via the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and the European Union Regional Development Fund (which has now ceased), we devised an electronic health passport back in October 2020 for one of our clients, to help get airlines flying again. However this solution has sparked a debate around ID cards and the reluctance of democratic Governments to be seen as effectively mandating that their populations get vaccinated. This could also be seen as discriminating against those who cannot or will not get vaccinated. However individuals keeping a record of their vaccine and test status with them when they fly or want to access services, such as music venues, pubs and restaurants, could get our economies moving again and help to reduce the mounting debt burden.

Surveys have shown that the majority of people in free democratic societies currently suffering from the restrictions imposed by lockdowns all over the world are willing to sacrifice some of their freedoms and carry an electronic health or vaccination passport with them, when they need to fly for vacations and business travel. However some prominent politicians and human rights organisations are still reluctant to follow the will of the majority, as they believe once these measures are introduced, it will be very difficult to eliminate them when the covid-19 pandemic is under control.

The cost to future generations is in the balance. If we continue as we have been doing, with lockdown following lockdown the cost in terms of lost jobs, social isolation and debts incurred by the respective Governments, will fall most heavily on the younger generation. They will experience high levels of unemployment and underemployment in an increasingly insecure and highly competitive job market, with more socially isolated people chasing fewer and fewer jobs with very limited possibilities for vacations, inflicting incalculable effects on their mental and physical health.