No images? Click here

TE TIRA ĀRAI URUTĀ
NZ ROYAL COMMISSION
COVID-19 LESSONS LEARNED

A final message from the COVID-19 Inquiry

Caption: Her Excellency, Dame Cindy Kiro, the Governor-General accepts the Inquiry's final reports.

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Te Tira Ārai Urutā – the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned is now complete.

This morning, we submitted the Inquiry's full suite of reports (from both Phase One and Phase Two) to the Governor-General, marking the end of the Inquiry's work.

It has been an honour to contribute to this important mahi of learning lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic response to help Aotearoa New Zealand prepare for and face future pandemics.

As the Phase Two Commissioners, we were asked to review the key decisions taken by the New Zealand Government as part of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic from February 2021 to October 2022. Specifically, we were asked to investigate the use of vaccines, including the vaccine approval process, vaccine mandates and vaccine safety, the use of lockdowns in late 2021 and the use of testing, tracing and other public health tools.

As part of this investigation, we were asked to determine whether the Government's decisions considered the possible impacts on our society, health, education and the economy, compared with the intended benefits, and whether they led to any unforeseen consequences.

Over the last 15 months, we have had the privilege of speaking with, and gathering evidence from, a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations from across Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas. This included former ministers and senior public servants, community and advocacy groups, businesses and subject-matter experts. We considered more than 31,000 submissions from members of the public and organisations, and we heard first-hand of people's experiences of living through the pandemic.

One thing that came through clearly over the course of this work was the fact that COVID-19 impacted every one of us, and we all experienced it in our own individual ways.

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences of the pandemic response with us – your contributions to our work have been instrumental in shaping and informing our findings, lessons and recommendations.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of everyone who helped Aotearoa New Zealand get through COVID-19. Whether you kept vital services like healthcare or food provisions going, supported your neighbours and communities, or were involved in making the tough decisions required to lead the country through the pandemic – thank you.

Lastly, we would like to thank everyone who has supported the Inquiry since it began in 2023 – thank you to the:

- Phase One Commissioners – Professor Tony Blakely, John Whitehead, and Hon. Hekia Parata

- Phase One and Phase Two Executive Directors – Anita West, Dr Justine Cornwall, Helen Potiki, Andrew Sweet, and Helen Wyn
- Phase One and Phase Two Secretariats
- Counsel assisting the Inquiry in both Phases, especially the Phase One counsel Jane Meares and Asher Emanuel and the Phase Two counsel Nicolette Levy KC and Danielle Kelly
- Te Tari Taiwhenua | Department of Internal Affairs and our other partners.

More than five years on, it is clear that some people continue to feel strongly and deeply about the Government's response to the pandemic. Since 2020, the COVID-19 virus has either caused or contributed to the deaths of an estimated 5,500 people in Aotearoa New Zealand. The range of experiences people shared with us was often heartfelt and personal, and we acknowledge those who suffered harm during the pandemic. We assure you that we have been constantly aware of what many of you endured.

It is our hope that the findings from this Inquiry – combined with the passage of time – will allow us all to move forward together with more understanding, empathy and respect for different perspectives.

Aotearoa New Zealand, and the world, will face pandemics in the future – just as we have in the past. It is therefore vital that we learn from our past experiences and prepare for the future, to ensure our country and our people make it through future pandemics with our health, happiness, and livelihoods intact.

Ngā manaakitanga,

Grant Illingworth KC	**Anthony Hill**	**Judy Kavanagh**
Chair	Commissioner	Commissioner

What happens now

Now that we have provided our report to the Governor-General, it will soon be handed to the New Zealand Government. The Government will release the report to the public on a date of their choosing. On this date, the report will be available on the Inquiry's website: https://www.covid19lessons.royalcommission.nz/reports-lessons-learned

Information on the report will be available in the following languages: te reo Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Hindi and Simplified Chinese. It will also be available in the following accessible formats: New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Braille, Audio, and Large Print.

A message will be sent out through Inquiry channels once the report has been made live.

Information and evidence held by the Inquiry will now be prepared for archiving. If you have provided evidence to the Inquiry, you will be contacted directly to confirm what is happening to your information.

All evidence will be provided to Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga | Archives New Zealand over the coming months. Some evidence will be kept confidential by Archives, while other information will be available on request from the public. Our final Minute – Minute 6: Access to Inquiry documents – lays out our decision-making process in this area.

If you have any questions about the work of the Inquiry, please contact InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz

OUR PURPOSE IS TO
LEARN FROM AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND'S EXPERIENCE OF THE PANDEMIC
TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

TE TIRA ĀRAI URUTĀ
NZ ROYAL COMMISSION
COVID-19 LESSONS LEARNED

Share Share Forward

THE NEW ZEALAND ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO COVID-19 LESSONS LEARNED I TE TIRA ĀRAI URUTĀ

https://www.covid19lessons.royalcommission.nz

© 2025. All rights reserved

Unsubscribe