

Royal Commission Report:

1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025

Overall summary

The October to December quarter saw the Inquiry move into substantive report development. Over the course of the quarter, lessons and recommendations were developed, natural justice processes were initiated and substantively completed, and the full report was in draft and went through a number of review cycles.

In turn, the January to March quarter will see the final report provided to the Governor General on the 26th of February and also the report being published, although the specific date for publication to occur is yet to be finalised. The Inquiry will begin disestablishment activities in earnest.

Key Streams of Work	Progress this quarter: 1 October to 31 December 2025
Information and evidence gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis: Analysis completed for the development of lessons and recommendations, plus ongoing work to support all parts of the report (especially responding to natural justice feedback). Research: Completed data collection and analysis for 'COVID-19 by the Numbers' supplementary report. Received commissioned research report from NZCER looking at the impact of the pandemic on student achievement.
Engagements, Interviews and Hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private interviews: One further interview was carried out in this period with former Prime Minister Rt Hon. Dame Jacinda Ardern. Engagements: five further engagements were held in this period, primarily with subject matter experts. Record of Inquiry engagements: a record of the Inquiry's interviews and engagements can be found on our website here.
Communications and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications: The focus this quarter was to ensure that Inquiry stakeholders and communities of interest were given additional information about the focus of the Inquiry, and what they can expect to see in the Inquiry's final report. There was a particular emphasis – via the Inquiry's core communication channels – on the Terms of Reference guiding the Inquiry, and how this will be addressed by the Commission. Newsletter: Two further COVID-19 Inquiry Panui were published and distributed during this period, while no further media releases were issued. In addition to the above, the Inquiry's communication focused on outlining the Inquiry's focus, such as the Natural Justice process, and report writing. Report design and production: a preferred design style for the report was selected by Commissioners, and an overall approach to communications products to support the report's release was developed, and started. In the next quarter the final report will be delivered to the Governor General on the 26th of February 2026 as per the requirements of the Order in Council that established this Inquiry and it will be published at a date to be determined by the Government.
Report Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report writing: A full draft report was prepared, including the following main sections: Part 1 – Purpose, Scope and Context; Part 2 – Key Decisions and Findings; Part 3 – Lessons and recommendations. Natural Justice processes were carried out progressively through the quarter, focussed on Part 2 (key decisions and findings), and Part 3 (lessons and recommendations). These processes are now complete. Report design/production: Production timelines for main report finalised, and approach to amendments developed. Report design layout has been confirmed and the development of associated communications products has begun. In the next quarter, the approved report will be delivered for design, and proofs will be reviewed as they become available ahead of delivery.

Financial performance

Year to date expenditure is below budget by \$0.156m

- The total budget for Phase Two is \$14.038 million across 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- Total budget for 2025/2026 is \$9.203m inclusive of Department and Non-Departmental Expenditure.
- Further costs will be incurred to complete design, printing, and publication of the report and then to formally close the Inquiry.
- The Inquiry is forecast to complete Phase Two work on time and within the agreed budget envelope.

	Actual (FY24-25)	YTD Actual (end December)	Budget	YTD Actual whole of Life	Whole of Life Budget
	2024/25 \$million	2025/26 \$million	2025/26 \$million	2024 - Dec 2025	2024 - 26 \$million
Controllable expenditure - operations	3.369	3.741	6.606	7.110	9.975
Uncontrollable expenditure - support	0.901	0.834	1.970	1.736	2.872
Commissioner costs	0.563	0.430	0.627	0.993	1.190
Total Expenditure	4.834	5.005	9.203	9.839	14.037
YTD Underspend	1.054	0.156			

Indicators of progress

Indicators	Progress	Commentary
• Indicator: Gathering information and evidence	Complete	Complete: Information and evidence gathering concluded with finalisation of research materials. This is now closed.
• Indicator: Engagements, interviews and hearings	Complete	Complete: Remaining interviews and hearings concluded. A small number of engagements were held to inform specific lessons learned.
• Indicator: Analysis of information and evidence	Complete	Complete: Analysis of information and evidence to inform findings is complete including the impact of occupational mandates in healthcare and education on labour market outcomes.
• Indicator: Report development	Green	On track. Report structure defined and agreed. Natural justice processes have concluded resulting in changes across Parts 2 and 3 of the report.
• Delivery of the Inquiry's final report by 26 February 2026	Green	On track. Detailed plan in place with the final report design underway. Activity to support publication of the report is being resourced. Supporting materials to aid understanding are in development.
• Delivery of the Inquiry's work programme within the budget provided by Government	Green	Expenditure remains within budget.

RAG: Green: On track. Amber: Some concerns exist, mitigation plans in place and being actively managed. Red: Off track, and further mitigation required.

At a glance

19,792 Total Newsletter Subscribers	9	Total Newsletters issued
26,980 Total livestream views in the July public hearings	6,300	Unique Inquiry website views for the quarter
	5	Total Media releases issued

Risks and Issues

Previously identified risks that we felt had the potential to impact on the ability of the Inquiry to complete its work within the timeframes set out, have either been addressed, or are being sufficiently managed to the point that we no longer feel they are likely to impact on our work.