



COVID-19 Inquiry Pānui

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A word from our Chair, Professor Tony Blakely

Kia ora koutou,

Phase One is progressing towards our final reporting date of 28 November 2024. We are currently working through the natural justice process, as well as writing our report.

We have heard from a wide range of voices throughout the first phase of the Inquiry, from key decision-makers to medical experts, advocacy groups and many different communities from across the country. We have covered a broad range of topics under our terms of reference, and I am confident the Inquiry will deliver an excellent, authoritative report.

During the course of our work, we have also witnessed the lingering divisions the pandemic has caused in New Zealand communities. My

hope is that our report will speak independently and help shine a light on what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and hopefully contribute to healing. It has been an absolute privilege to hear so many people reflecting on their own pandemic experiences and Aotearoa New Zealand's overall COVID-19 response.

Since our last pānui, the Government has announced the terms of reference for Phase Two of the Inquiry. The Government has also confirmed the Commissioners for Phase Two. John Whitehead and I will complete our time as Commissioners at the end of Phase One, and Grant Illingworth KC will take up the role of Chair for Phase Two. Grant will be joined by Judy Kavanagh and Anthony Hill as Commissioners for Phase Two. We look forward to formally welcoming Judy and Anthony later in 2024, as they begin planning for the second phase of the Inquiry.

In this issue of our pānui we have included a progress update on Phase One and more information about the terms of reference for Phase Two. You can also hear about the progress we have made in my recent interview with [RNZ's Morning Report](#).

Heoi ano ra,



Professor Tony Blakely

Royal Commission Chair

Inquiry progress update

The Inquiry is working to complete its Phase One report by 28 November 2024. Our current focus is on completing the natural justice process, and finalising the lessons and

recommendations we consider will help inform future pandemic planning in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Phase One of the Inquiry is likely to conclude that some aspects of the pandemic response could have been done differently or better. Our Inquiry is not a blame finding Inquiry, but in finding the lessons there are inevitably some conclusions about the past. The natural justice process involves the Inquiry contacting those about whom the Inquiry might make an adverse finding and giving them the chance to respond. This is provided for in the Inquiries Act (2013).

Subject to this, the Inquiry is in the final stages of writing the report, which will cover the Inquiry's findings regarding Aotearoa New Zealand's pandemic response, as well as the lessons to be learned to prepare for future pandemics and the recommendations the Inquiry will make on how Aotearoa can prepare for future pandemics. The report covers the topics outlined in the [Phase One terms of reference](#) and will be presented to the Minister of Internal Affairs by 28 November 2024. Phase One has also completed all final engagements. You can view the list of who we've met with on our website [here](#).

Phase Two: terms of reference and Commissioners announced

Te Tira Ārai Urutā the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned will be conducted in two phases. Phase One is currently underway and will report on the topics laid out in the [Phase One terms of reference](#) by 28 November 2024.

Phase Two will be able to begin gathering evidence from 29 November 2024. It will be led by new Commissioners and guided by an amended terms of reference that expand the scope of the Inquiry. The terms of reference are set by the New Zealand Government.

The Government announced the expanded terms of reference for Phase Two on 27 August 2024. They set out additional areas of focus, or areas to be looked at in more detail, including the review of key decisions taken by Government in response to COVID-19 between February 2021 and October 2022, in relation to:

- Vaccines – including mandates, the approval of COVID-19 vaccines, and vaccine safety
- Lockdowns – including the extended lockdown for Auckland and Northland in late 2021
- Procurement – specifically the impact of private sector involvement (or non-involvement) in the procurement, development and distribution of testing and tracing technologies and non-pharmaceutical public health materials.

The Inquiry will consider whether these decisions were sufficiently informed by advice on any social and economic disruption they were likely to cause. Phase One's terms of reference also include mandates and lockdowns, but these are areas that Phase Two will investigate in more detail, as well as addressing new topics like vaccine safety.

Phase Two will be chaired by Grant Illingworth KC, who joined the Inquiry on 2 August 2024. Mr Illingworth is a litigation specialist who was called to the bar in 1974 and has conducted his own practice as a barrister since 1975. Mr Illingworth will be joined by two other Commissioners, Judy Kavanagh and Anthony Hill, who have experience in economics and public health, respectively. They will join the Inquiry later in 2024, and we look forward to introducing them soon.

You can read the full terms of reference for Phase Two on the [New Zealand Legislation website](#).

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