



COVID-19 Inquiry Pānui

Issue 14 - 07 November 2024

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A word from our Chair, Professor Tony Blakely

Kia ora koutou,

There is just under a month remaining until Phase One provides its report to the Minister for Internal Affairs.

The Inquiry team is hard at work putting the final touches on the contents, and working through the many other tasks required to produce a Royal Commission report and wrapping up Phase One of the Inquiry.

Understandably, the run-up to 28 November – when our report will be delivered – is one of our busiest periods. We are confident the Government will find our report useful and constructive in helping Aotearoa New Zealand prepare for future pandemics.


Phase One of the Inquiry got underway in February 2023. Since then, we've done everything from assessing thousands of pages of evidence, through to receiving submissions from the public, and holding nearly 400 evidence gathering meetings across the North and South Islands, and even with some stakeholders based overseas. We have included a look back at the progress of Phase One below, as well as a summary of our terms of reference, in anticipation of the finalisation and release of our report.

Thank you again to everyone who provided their time, effort, and insights into Aotearoa New Zealand's pandemic response as part of this phase of the Inquiry.

This is our second-to-last issue of the newsletter ahead of Phase One concluding. We'll update you again before the end of the month about our progress and likely next steps. From 29 November 2024, Phase Two of the Inquiry will begin gathering evidence against a revised terms of reference. Please see below an update from Grant Illingworth KC on the progress of Phase Two of the Inquiry.

Thank you again to everyone who has shown an interest in the work of the Inquiry so far.

Heoi ano ra,



Professor Tony Blakely

Royal Commission Chair



An update on Phase Two of the Inquiry from Grant Illingworth KC, Chair

Tēnā koutou katoa,

The Phase Two leadership team and I are making good progress on getting Phase Two of the COVID-19 Inquiry underway.

We now have three Commissioners – myself, Judy Kavanagh, and Anthony Hill – on board to lead the work of the Inquiry. We have also been joined by a new Executive Director and legal Counsel, as well as several staff members who will support this important transition between the two phases of the Inquiry.

Planning is well underway for how we will approach the topics set out in our terms of reference. The planning stage of Phase Two runs until 28 November 2024. From 29 November, we will be able to begin gathering evidence. It's important to note, that as per our terms of reference, we can't begin formally gathering evidence before this date.

We look forward to sharing more information with you on the opportunities you will have to engage with Phase Two soon – either later this year, or early next. In the meantime, I would like to formally introduce my fellow Phase Two Commissioners.

Judy Kavanagh is a public policy and economics expert with experience in making evidence-based policy recommendations to Government. She spent ten years at the Productivity Commission working on a range of inquiries from housing affordability to tertiary education. She has a particular interest in the economic evaluation of public health interventions. She was a lecturer in Economics for fifteen years

and produced a range of research during that time.

Anthony Hill is a barrister who has particular expertise in the health and disability sectors in New Zealand. He served as Health and Disability Commissioner for a decade from 2010-2020. Prior to that he held senior positions in the Ministry of Health Manatū Hauora for 15 years, including 5 years as a Deputy Director-General of Health, and a period of time as the Ministry's Chief Legal Advisor.

Judy, Anthony, and I will be supported by Helen Potiki, who has been appointed as Executive Director for Phase Two. Helen has extensive experience in leadership, including most recently as the Executive Director for the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

I hope you find this update useful. We will continue to update you on the work of Phase Two via this Pānui – if you remain subscribed, we'll ensure you're well informed on future developments. If for any reason you need to contact the Inquiry in the meantime, the best way to do that is via our Inquiry email address: InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz.

I look forward to providing you with further updates on Phase Two soon.

Ngā mihi nui,

Grant Illingworth KC

The Inquiry by the numbers

The COVID-19 Inquiry will deliver its Phase One report to the Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon Brooke van Velden, on 28 November 2024.

Over the last 21 months, the COVID-19 Inquiry has been working to learn lessons from Aotearoa New Zealand's COVID-19 pandemic response to help us prepare for future pandemics. Take a look back through what we've achieved during that time as we prepare to deliver the Phase One report.



A big part of the Inquiry's work was travelling around Aotearoa to meet with organisations and individuals involved with and impacted by the pandemic response. The Inquiry travelled as far north as Kaitiāia and as far south as Ōtepoti Dunedin to hear from decision-makers, Government agencies, health and social service providers, businesses, iwi and Māori, community leaders, educators, advocacy groups and many more about their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- We've held nearly 400 meetings
- We've met with over 1600 individuals
- We've met with over 250 organisations
- We've travelled from Te Tai Tokerau Northland to Ōtākou Otago to meet with stakeholders



During Phase One, we gathered evidence from across Aotearoa and from people living overseas. We heard from members of the public and from organisations and individuals impacted by and responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic response. We received information from Government agencies, academics, members of the public and many other sources.

- We've received nearly 13,000 submissions from members of the public that covered over 1200 COVID-19 related topics.
- We received nearly 100 direct submissions from organisations.
- We've collected over 133,000 pages of evidence.
- We've received evidence from the health, law, aged care, justice, hospitality, travel and tourism, cultural, aviation, media, retail, farming, emergency response, import/export, funeral, and finance sectors, government, key decision-makers, community organisations, charities, researchers, youth support organisations, religious organisations, iwi, disabled communities, and advocacy groups.
- We heard from NZ European/Pākehā, Māori, Pasifika, Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and Latin American people.

We recorded videos with some of the individuals and organisations we met with during Phase One. You can see those [on our website](#).



During Phase One, the Inquiry was asked to look at the topics laid out in the [Phase One Terms of Reference](#). Briefly, the terms of reference cover:

- The actions of the Government, including the use of lockdowns, border restrictions, vaccines and mandates, among other measures.
- The response of the health system, including how day-to-day healthcare and COVID-19 related healthcare was managed.
- The economic and social impacts of the pandemic and the Government's response to these challenges, including everything from the Wage Subsidy Scheme and access to food, to the delivery of education and the impacts on social cohesion.
- The Government's communication, engagement and decision-making.
- How the interests of Māori were considered, and how the pandemic impacted different communities.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to Phase One of the Inquiry. We are honoured to have had so many people contribute their time, expertise and insights to the Inquiry's work.

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