

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

PĀNUI

COVID-19 Inquiry Newsletter: Issue 18

8 APRIL 2025

In this issue:

- **A message from our Chair**
- **An update on public submissions**
- **Phase One - permanently confidential submissions**
- **An update on feedback on the terms of reference**
- **Minute 2**
- **Keep up with the work of the Inquiry**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



Five years' on, the COVID-19 pandemic and Aotearoa New Zealand's response to it is still a focus for many.

Aotearoa has recently marked a series of significant anniversaries – 28 February 2020 saw the first COVID-19 case identified in New Zealand, 19 March 2020 the day the borders closed, and 25 March 2020 – the day Aotearoa New Zealand entered Level 4 lockdown.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an incredibly difficult time, and many people are still feeling the effects of the pandemic and the response to it, whether those be physical, emotional, or financial. The ongoing effects of the pandemic and the response to it are clear in the public submissions received by Phase Two of the Inquiry.

The use of lockdowns is a focus for many submitters, particularly those from the Auckland and Northland regions. Vaccines, particularly the use of vaccine mandates, is also a focus of many submissions. The sentiment of submissions ranges widely, from those who are critical of the New Zealand Government's response as a whole, to those who are positive about the overall response, as well as many who hold mixed views about the response.

Thank you to those who have made a submission so far. The more people we hear from, the better the picture we can build of the impact of the pandemic and the response to it. The public submissions portal is open until 27 April 2025.

The Inquiry's primary purpose is to make sure that lessons are learned for the future, and that Aotearoa New Zealand is prepared for future pandemics. We aim to provide the Government with recommendations – that can be understood by all New Zealanders – to help build a strong response for the future.

As well as receiving public submissions, the Inquiry will also gather evidence in other ways. This month we will begin holding interviews with key decision-makers and those who gave advice regarding the pandemic response. We

will also hold meetings with people impacted by the pandemic and the response to it. We continue to work our way through the evidence provided by government agencies and other organisations in response to our information requests, as well as reviewing publicly available information on Aotearoa New Zealand's response to COVID-19.

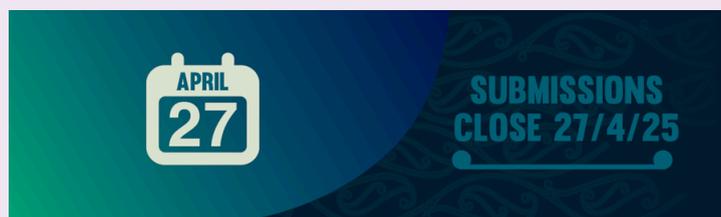
As part of supporting this work, I am delighted to welcome our new counsel assisting, Nicolette Levy KC and Danielle Kelly, to the Inquiry. Nicolette brings more than 25 years' experience as a barrister in criminal law, family and relationship law, disciplinary matters, and civil litigation to the Inquiry. Danielle is a barrister with experience in civil and criminal litigation and public law. Both Nicolette and Danielle's extensive legal expertise will be invaluable to our work, and it's great to have them on-board.

Ngā mihi nui,



Grant Illingworth KC
Chair – Phase Two

AN UPDATE ON PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS



The Inquiry's public submissions portal has been open for just over two months.

Thank you to everyone who has made a submission so far. Hearing from the public is a very important part of our work, both in reviewing Aotearoa New Zealand's response to COVID-19 and in informing recommendations to prepare for future pandemics.

So far, we have heard from:

- People of all ages, with the largest number of submissions coming from those aged 55-64 and the smallest number from those aged under-18.
- People from across Aotearoa New Zealand, with the largest number of submissions coming from Tamaki Makaurau Auckland, as well as significant numbers coming from Te Tai Tokerau Northland and Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka a Maui Nelson-Tasman.
- People from many different ethnic backgrounds.
- People who experienced the pandemic as a disabled or ill person, those who describe their disability as being caused by an adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine, and those who experience long Covid.

The public submissions portal is open until midnight 27 April 2025. You can make a submission by visiting www.covid19inquiry.nz or by calling 0800 500 306 (NZ Relay is available).

Update: Phase One permanently confidential submissions

Any submissions made to Phase One of the Inquiry that were non-confidential and that are relevant to the topics being investigated by Phase Two will be considered as part of Phase Two's work.

Many of the submissions made to Phase One were made permanently confidential at the

request of the person who provided the submission.

Phase Two does not have access to these submissions and also cannot remove the permanent confidentiality from these submissions.

However, the Department of Internal Affairs - Te Tari Taiwhenua can, when requested to do so by the Royal Commission, provide copies of permanently confidential submissions directly to the person who made the submission.

How to get your submission

If you would like a copy of your Phase One submission, please email InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz. You will need to provide the name and email address you used to make your Phase One submission.

If your submission was permanently confidential, the Inquiry will pass your details on to the Department of Internal Affairs and they will email your submission to you.

If your submission was not permanently confidential, the Inquiry will be able to send you a copy.

FEEDBACK ON THE INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE



In February and March 2024, Phase One of the Inquiry hosted two consultations.

One gave the public the chance to share their COVID-19 pandemic experiences with the Inquiry, and the other gave the public the chance to provide feedback on the Inquiry's terms of reference.

All feedback on the terms of reference was sent to the Department of Internal Affairs – Te Tari Taiwhenua (DIA) and was considered as part of the process of developing the terms of reference for Phase Two. The terms of reference lay out which topics we can assess.

We know that many people also shared their COVID-19 experience in their terms of reference feedback form. As this information was provided to DIA, Phase One of the Inquiry was not able to consider any COVID-19 experiences that were shared alongside the feedback.

Under the Inquiries Act, Phase Two of the COVID-19 Inquiry has sought copies of all feedback provided to DIA and been provided with these.

If you:

- Gave feedback on the Inquiry's terms of reference and
- Shared your COVID-19 experience during that process and
- Your experience covered the topics Phase Two are investigating.

We will consider your COVID-19 experience as part of our work. The more experiences we can consider, the better our understanding of the pandemic and Aotearoa New Zealand's response to it will be, and this will help inform any findings or recommendations that we might make about future pandemic preparedness.





The Inquiry has issued a new legal Minute, 'Minute Two'.

You can read this Minute on the [Procedural Minutes page of the Inquiry's website](#).

This Minute provides guidance on the Inquiry's evidence-gathering processes. It outlines the methods by which Phase Two will gather evidence, such as reviewing publicly available information, reviewing available submissions to Phase One, accepting public submissions, issuing section 20 notices, and holding interviews, engagements, and public hearings.

This Minute also details how the Inquiry will treat the information gathered through the different methods outlined above, such as confidentiality, for example.

KEEP UP WITH THE WORK OF THE INQUIRY

As well as this pānui, you can also receive updates about the Inquiry on:

- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)

You can also find updates about the Inquiry on our [website](#).

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



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