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## COVID-19 Inquiry Newsletter: Issue 21

6 AUGUST 2025

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### A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



**At the beginning of July, the Inquiry held our first week of public hearings.**

Throughout the week, we heard from business leaders, medical peak bodies, education

experts, advocacy organisations, specific sectors, community representatives, ethnic community and cultural leaders, and academics. We also heard from population groups including Māori, Pasifika, disabled communities, and people in remote locations.

We heard perspectives on lockdowns, mandates, and vaccine safety from across Aotearoa New Zealand.

On behalf of my fellow Commissioners and I, thank you to the many witnesses that shared their perspectives with us during the public hearings. We know that talking about the pandemic is not always easy, and we are grateful to everyone who gave their time and provided many valuable insights.

The information we have gathered will play an important role in the work of the Inquiry as we build a picture of the pandemic response in Aotearoa New Zealand and work towards our recommendations for future pandemic preparedness.

For those who were unable to watch the livestream of the hearings at the time, you can find more information below on how you can view the recordings and learn more about what the Inquiry heard during week one of the hearings.

We have now turned our attention to preparing for week two of the public hearings, which will begin on 20 August 2025. As with week one, this week of hearings will be livestreamed. We will publish the full witness list for this week on our website later in the month. The Inquiry also continues to gather and analyse information from many sources.

We are considering information gathered from written evidence and Government documents,

interviews with key decision makers and advisors, meetings with organisations and community groups, and public submissions. Together this evidence will inform our findings about decisions made during the pandemic, as well as our recommendations to the Government on how Aotearoa New Zealand can prepare to respond to future pandemics. Our goal is to learn lessons from the pandemic response, and help our country be prepared for whatever comes in the future.

Ngā mihi nui,



**Grant Illingworth KC**  
Chair – Phase Two

## PUBLIC HEARINGS



### Week one

The first week of Inquiry public hearings ran from 7 July 2025 to 11 July 2025.

During the week, the Inquiry heard from organisations and communities from around Aotearoa New Zealand about their experiences of the pandemic and the Government's response to it.

The following groups and organisations gave evidence:

- businesses and business industry organisations
- researchers
- disabled community members and their carers and whānau
- the general practice sector
- organisations that represent seniors
- Pasifika health and social service providers
- community leaders from Auckland communities
- Auckland Council
- Māori health and social service providers
- the education sector
- young people
- advocacy groups
- mandated industries – the healthcare sector, ports, and carers
- the hospitality sector.



*The Inquiry hears from young people from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Te Tai Tokerau Northland.*

The witnesses shared their experiences of and insights into lockdowns, especially the extended Auckland and Northland lockdowns, vaccine mandates, and vaccine safety.

The Inquiry also shared video recordings from a range of individuals who shared their experiences via public submission during the submissions period earlier this year.

Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and insights during week one of the public hearings. It is vital to the work of the Inquiry to hear a broad range of experiences in order to build a picture of Aotearoa New Zealand's pandemic experiences before we make our recommendations.



*The Inquiry hears from Māori health and social service providers at the hearings.*

Recordings of each day of week one of the hearings are available on the [Inquiry's website](#).

A summary report of the hearings will also be available in the coming weeks. This report will be available in English, te reo Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Hindi, Simplified Chinese, New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Braille, Audio, and Large Print.

If you would like to be emailed when this report is available, please [enter your email address here](#).

## **Week two**

The Inquiry will hold its second week of hearings from 20 August 2025 in Wellington.

The purpose of these hearings is to hear testimony from those who led Aotearoa New Zealand's response to the pandemic, as well as to provide insights into the decision-making process including the reasons certain decisions were made during the Government's response to COVID-19.

The hearings will be livestreamed on the Inquiry's website. Media will also be invited to cover the hearings.

A full schedule for week two of the hearings will be available on the Inquiry's website before the hearings begin. More information will also be provided in this newsletter and on the Inquiry's social media channels.

## RECORD OF INQUIRY ENGAGEMENTS



**The Inquiry has published a record of our Inquiry engagements.**

This record lists all engagements and interviews the Inquiry has conducted so far.

An engagement is a meeting with a community, group, or individual who has shared their

experiences of the pandemic and the Government's response to it. An interview is a meeting with a key decision-maker, Government official, or expert who provided advice that influenced key decisions during the Government's response to COVID-19.

The purpose of the record is to be transparent about who the Inquiry has met with and why the Inquiry chose to meet with them.

The record will also include short summaries of the engagements held by the Inquiry, so people can learn more about the range of views and experiences of the pandemic and the Government's response to it that have been shared with the Inquiry. These will be published on our website in the coming days.

[View the record on our website here.](#)

## CONNECT WITH US

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



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

<https://www.covid19lessons.royalcommission.nz>

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