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## COVID-19 Inquiry Newsletter: Issue 22

22 SEPTEMBER 2025

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### A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



**Welcome to the next issue of our Inquiry newsletter, the COVID-19 Pānui.**

Today we would like to give you a full update on our work so far, as well as where the Inquiry is

going next.

Read on below to learn more about the different initiatives the Inquiry has undertaken and the next steps, including our next [Inquiry Minute](#).

Ngā mihi nui,



**Grant Illingworth KC**  
Chair – Phase Two

## THE INQUIRY SO FAR



### **Phase Two of the COVID-19 Inquiry began gathering evidence on 29 November 2024.**

The purpose of Phase Two of the Inquiry is to review key decisions made by the New Zealand Government between February 2021 and October 2022 in the following areas: vaccine mandates, safety, and approvals, lockdowns (especially the extended Auckland and Northland lockdowns of late 2021), and testing, tracing, and public health materials. You can read the full terms of reference [here](#). After reviewing these decisions, Phase Two will make recommendations to the New Zealand Government on how Aotearoa New Zealand can

best prepare for future pandemics.

Phase Two began gathering evidence by issuing section 20 orders to key Government agencies, as well as other key stakeholders. These orders required the organisations who received them to provide information they held relevant to the Inquiry's work.

The Inquiry then launched an online portal to gather submissions from the public. The portal was open to anyone who wanted to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Government's response to it. The Inquiry received over 31,000 submissions during this period.

In April 2025, the Inquiry began holding interviews and engagements. Interviews were held with key decision makers and advisers in order to gain insights into the key decisions under review by the Inquiry. Engagements were held with organisations, community groups, businesses, advocacy groups, subject matter experts, and others across Aotearoa New Zealand in order to hear a range of pandemic experiences.



*The Commissioners and counsel assisting hear from witnesses at the Pandemic Perspectives hearings*

In July 2025, the Inquiry continued to hear experiences of the pandemic through the 'Pandemic Perspectives' hearings. The Inquiry heard from 52 witnesses regarding the pandemic experience in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a particular focus on lockdowns and vaccine safety and mandates.

Phase Two of the Inquiry is currently completing the last of the evidence gathering process, after which the natural justice process and the final report preparation will begin.

The Inquiry undertakes a natural justice process as part of its work. This is to ensure that any person mentioned in an adverse finding is aware of the matters on which the finding is based and has had the opportunity to respond to those matters.

After this process is completed, the Inquiry will finalise its report. This process includes report drafting, and report production. The final report, including the Inquiry's review of the key decisions laid out in our terms of reference and the recommendations for future pandemic preparedness, will be delivered to the Governor-General on 26 February 2026.

A full timeline of the work of the Inquiry is available on the [Inquiry website](#).

## RECENT ACTIVITES AND NEXT STEPS



**Recent weeks have been a busy period for the Inquiry, with a particular focus in September on completing our evidence gathering process.**

As you will have heard from us in August, we decided not to proceed with a second week of planned public hearings. The Inquiry made this decision after former Ministers declined to give evidence voluntarily in public at the hearings.

Since then, we have heard from people who have expressed a range of views about this decision. We recognise there was significant interest in the hearings, how the evidence from former Ministers would be gathered, and how the work of the Inquiry would proceed in the absence of a further week of hearings.

To reiterate, we considered that compelling the former ministers to attend a hearing would have created an adversarial situation that would not have advanced the purposes of the Inquiry and would not have been an efficient process to obtain the remaining evidence we need to fulfil our terms of reference.

The Inquiry has now issued [Minute 5](#) which sets out our approach to the final stage of our evidence gathering. The Inquiry is confident that any evidence needed can be gathered through a process of further interviews and requests for written information. These interviews, particularly with former Ministers, have either taken place, or are in the process of being arranged. We have published a list of interviews and engagements conducted by the Inquiry [on our website](#) and this will be updated as we proceed.

Once all information is gathered, the Inquiry will be in a position to consider whether any permanent orders regarding confidentiality

should be made in relation to evidence received by Phase Two. All information currently held by the Inquiry is covered by an interim section 15 order which restricts access to it. As explained in Minutes 1 and 2, the Inquiry will consider granting permanent orders at the conclusion of the Inquiry, but only where that outcome is clearly justified. Some information may be available through Archives New Zealand following the closedown period of the Inquiry.

Our report, due to be delivered to the Governor-General on 26 February 2026, will provide a comprehensive review of key decisions, and the consequences of those decisions, as required by our terms of reference. In accordance with the Inquiry's purpose, our report will set out lessons to be learned from Aotearoa New Zealand's response to the pandemic and the Inquiry's recommendations to the New Zealand Government regarding future pandemic preparedness.

Thank you again for your continued interest in, contributions to, and support of our work. It is much appreciated, and we look forward to keeping you updated as the Inquiry progresses.

## CONNECT WITH US

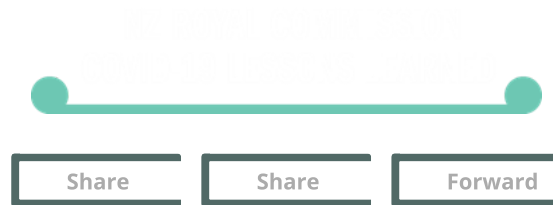
As well as this pānui, you can also receive updates about the Inquiry on:

- [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  
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