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COVID-19 Inquiry Newsletter: Issue 23

10 NOVEMBER 2025

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



The work of the Inquiry continues at pace.

The final report of Phase Two of the Inquiry is due in around four months' time. At this stage, our evidence collection has been completed,

and analysis of the evidence has been undertaken.

The Inquiry has gathered evidence from interviews with key decision-makers and advisers, meetings with organisations and communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, written submissions from the public, written evidence collected from key organisations and individuals, and from our week of public hearings. Our goal has been to build a wide-ranging picture of the topics laid out in our terms of reference in order to provide comprehensive recommendations to the Government on how Aotearoa New Zealand can prepare for and face future pandemics.

The Inquiry team has begun drafting its final report. This draft will undergo several reviews and refinements as we develop our findings and recommendations. Of particular focus for the Inquiry at the moment is the section of our report that covers our findings. This is the section that describes what the Inquiry has found following our review of 'key decisions' as per our terms of reference.

These findings are subject to a natural justice process which we are undertaking during October and November. This involves ensuring that any person mentioned in an adverse finding made by the Inquiry is aware of the matters on which this finding is based and has the opportunity to respond.

Given that we are in the process of finalising our report, we wanted to take the opportunity to focus more closely on our Inquiry's terms of reference in order to ensure people are well informed about what to expect when our report is released. In this issue, we look more closely at the purpose of the Inquiry, and we will examine other elements of our terms of reference in future issues.

The remainder of this year, and early next, will be spent completing the various sections of our report which will then be provided to the Governor-General on 26 February 2026, marking the end of the COVID-19 Inquiry.

We thank all of those who have provided support to, and shown interest in our work. We will continue to keep you up to date here and through our other communications channels as we work towards the delivery of the final report.

In other news, I would also like to welcome a new Executive Director, Helen Wyn, to the Inquiry. Helen is a very experienced senior public sector leader who has held senior roles in many areas across Government. Helen will, I am certain, make a significant contribution to the Inquiry as we complete the final stages of our work. On behalf of my fellow Commissioners, and the wider Secretariat, I would like to thank our departing Executive Director, Andrew Sweet, for his outstanding work to date. Andrew joined the Inquiry just as we concluded the establishment phase of our work, and has been tireless in his efforts to progress and complete the major findings component of the Inquiry. We wish him well with the new opportunity he has accepted. Helen will start with the Inquiry this week, following a handover period with the current Executive Director.

Ngā mihi nui,



Grant Illingworth KC
Chair – Phase Two

NATURAL JUSTICE



The natural justice process for the Inquiry is currently underway.

The Inquiry is required to undertake a natural justice process as part of its work. This process ensures that any person mentioned in an adverse finding made by the Inquiry (a finding that reflects negatively on that person) is aware of the matters on which the finding is based and has had the opportunity to respond before the report is published.

Relevant information has been provided to those people and organisations who need to receive it during the natural justice process.

Once this process is completed, the Inquiry will be able to complete the final report and prepare it for submission to the Governor-General on 26 February 2026.

Should you have any questions about this process, please email the Inquiry on InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz.

THE INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE



All Royal Commissions of Inquiry are governed by a terms of reference.

The terms of reference sets out important details about the Inquiry, such as who the Commissioners are, what matter the Inquiry has been asked to look into, and what areas specifically the Inquiry should and should not make findings on as part of its work.

As the COVID-19 Inquiry enters its final stages and prepares to submit our report, we wanted to take our readers through the terms of reference to share more about what we have been working on and what topics will be covered – and what topics won't be covered – in our final report.

Over the next few issues, the Inquiry will share information on different parts of our terms of reference as we approach the delivery date for our final report.

You can view the full terms of reference [here](#).

The matter of public importance and the purpose of the Inquiry

The Inquiry's terms of reference describes what 'matter of public importance' the Inquiry should look into, and what the purpose of the Inquiry is.

Both phases of the COVID-19 Inquiry have the same matter of public importance and the same purpose.

All Inquiries have a matter of public importance.

This is the event or issue that requires the authority of a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate.

For the COVID-19 Inquiry, the matter of public importance we have been asked to examine is the lessons learned from Aotearoa New Zealand's response to COVID-19 that should be applied in preparation for any future pandemic.

This means that the Inquiry has been asked to look at what New Zealand can learn from how we faced the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, we are looking at what lessons we can learn from the COVID-19 pandemic that should be used to help us prepare to face future pandemics.

The purpose of the Inquiry covers what the work of the Inquiry should help to achieve. For the COVID-19 Inquiry, the purpose is to strengthen Aotearoa New Zealand's preparedness for, and response to, any future pandemic by identifying those lessons learned from New Zealand's response to COVID-19 that should be applied in preparation for any future pandemic.

This means the Inquiry should provide findings and recommendations that help Aotearoa New Zealand prepare for and face future pandemics by learning from how New Zealand responded to COVID-19.

Next issue

In our next issue, we will cover in more depth the specific topics Phase Two of the Inquiry has been asked to cover.

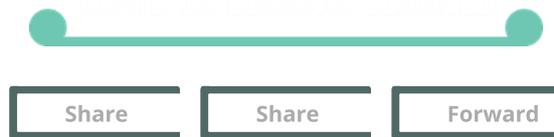
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OUR PURPOSE IS TO
**LEARN FROM AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND'S
EXPERIENCE OF THE PANDEMIC**
TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE



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