



COVID-19 Inquiry Pānui

In this issue:

- An update from our Chair, Professor Blakely
- The Inquiry visit to Te Tai Tokerau Northland and other engagements
- An update on public submissions
- An overview of the Inquiry so far

A word from our Chair, Professor Tony Blakely



Kia ora koutou,

A real focus for the Inquiry during February has been to ensure that people can share their experiences with us. I'm really pleased to let you know that people are taking up this opportunity and that as of today, over 4700 people have shared their story.

It's great that so many people have provided a submission. A vital part of the work of the Inquiry is hearing from Aotearoa New Zealanders about their COVID-19 experiences

and their thoughts on how our country can plan for future pandemics.

We are honoured to hear your stories and receive your contributions to the work of the Inquiry, and my thanks to everyone who has shared their experiences with the Inquiry so far. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all of us, and we know that sharing your stories can be difficult or upsetting.

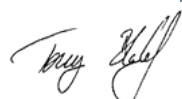
As you may also be aware, the Inquiry is undertaking a consultation process on an expanded terms of reference on behalf of the New Zealand Government. The terms of reference set out the topics that the Inquiry will look at. At the end of the consultation period, the feedback will be provided directly to the Department of Internal Affairs ahead of the Government making decisions about what an expanded terms of reference might include. We'll let you know more about that in a further update in the coming months.

For those who would like to share their stories or provide feedback on the terms of reference, public consultation is open at www.covid19inquiry.nz until 24 March 2024.

Alongside public consultation, the Inquiry also continued with our direct engagements, including a visit to Te Tai Tokerau Northland (see our update below). Te Tai Tokerau had a different – many would say more challenging – experience of COVID-19 to other parts of Aotearoa New Zealand, and hearing from Iwi, businesses, health and education providers, and the local Council about this experience was incredibly valuable.

Thank you again for your interest in the work of the Inquiry, and I hope you find this latest update from us to be both useful and relevant.

Heoi ano ra,



Te Tai Tokerau the focus for Inquiry engagements this month

February saw the Inquiry travel to the far North, holding meetings across three days in Whangarei, Kaikohe, and Kaitiāia. During the visit, Commissioners and the Inquiry met with Iwi representatives, the Te Hiku Covid Response Group, Te Tai Tokerau Border Control, local councils and emergency management, health and social services providers, businesses, education providers, and with wider members of the Northland community. The Commission aimed to hear from local groups about their COVID-19 experience and the impacts of COVID-19 (including extended lockdowns) in the region.

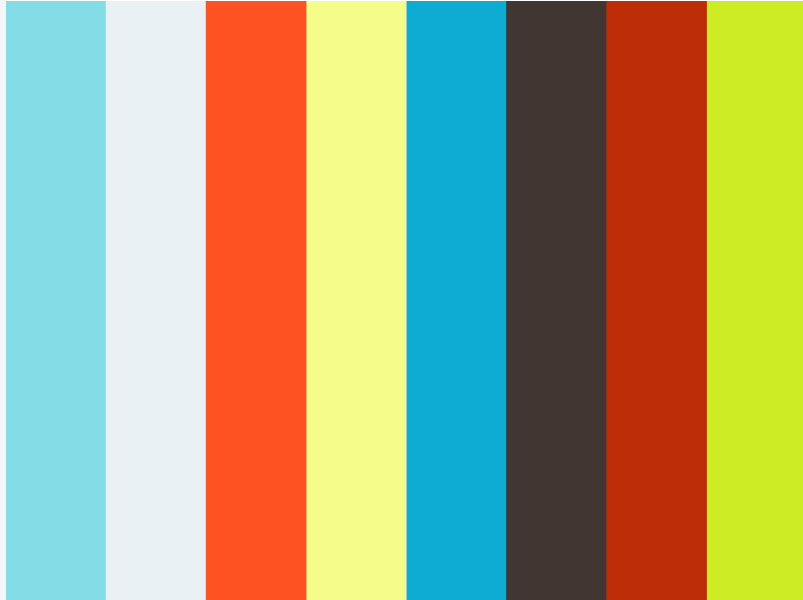


The visit was covered on [RNZ Morning Report](#).

As well as travelling to Te Tai Tokerau, the Inquiry also continued meetings with organisations and individuals around the country. Commissioners and the Inquiry met

with economists, media representatives, mis- and-disinformation experts, and cultural sector representatives. Commissioners also visited with prisoners to better understand their experiences of the pandemic.

The Inquiry also held the first of a series of community engagements. In Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, the Inquiry met with University students, members of the disabled community, small businesses, and community support organisations. Further South, the Inquiry held meetings with University students, essential workers, members of the disabled community, and members of the Rainbow community in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.



You can view everyone the Inquiry has met with so far here: [Record of Inquiry Engagements](#).



First month of public consultation completed

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned opened public consultation on 8 February 2024.

The Commission is encouraging people to share their experiences of COVID-19 to inform our understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand's response and our recommendations about how to better prepare for future pandemics.

The Commission is also hosting a consultation on the terms of reference. The New Zealand Government has said it is committed to broadening the Inquiry's terms of reference, and would like to hear feedback from the New Zealand public on the proposed expansion.

New Zealanders have been informed about the opportunity to share their experiences through social media, TV, radio, and outdoor advertising. If you haven't seen our TV advert yet, you can view it on the Inquiry's [YouTube channel](#). Our Commissioners also appeared on 1 News, the AM Show, Mike Hosking Breakfast, Pacific Media Network News, Radio531PI, Reality Check Radio, The Platform, and TVNZ Breakfast to talk about the consultation.

After three weeks of consultation, the Inquiry has:

- Received over 4700 COVID-19 stories.
- Heard from people all around Aotearoa New Zealand, including the Chatham Islands.
- Heard from over 1300 essential workers.
- Received submissions on behalf of families, Iwi, businesses, and organisations.

As part of public consultations, the Royal Commission will also have pop-up stalls at events around the country, including festivals, markets, and A&P shows. If you are attending one of these events, you can come by the stand to hear more about how to share your story, and get assistance making a submission if you require it.

We look forward to hearing from more New Zealanders up until consultation closes on 24 March 2024.

You can share your story or your feedback on the terms of reference at www.covid19inquiry.nz.

Covid-19 Inquiry – a quick recap

New to the newsletter? Welcome! It's great to have you as a subscriber. With a number of you recently signing up for our updates, we wanted to share a quick recap on the background and work to date of the Royal Commission.

The New Zealand Government [announced the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned on 8 December 2022](#). The purpose of the Inquiry is to learn lessons from Aotearoa New Zealand's response to COVID-19 that should be applied in preparation for any future pandemic.

The Royal Commission is led by [Chair Professor Tony Blakely and Commissioner John Whitehead](#). Hon Hekia Parata was also appointed a Commissioner in December 2022, but resigned from the Inquiry to focus on family commitments and issues in Tairāwhiti Gisborne, and subsequently left in November 2023.

You can read [our current terms of reference here](#), but note that the Government has said it is committed to expanding the current terms of reference, and we are [currently seeking feedback on their behalf](#).

Initially, and as per its terms of reference, the Inquiry's focus was on identifying and sourcing publicly available information. This included an

initial communication to Government agencies about reports – of which there were a large number- reviews and information that could help inform the Commission’s work.

More recently, the Inquiry contacted a wide range of organisations and institutions including community organisations and NGOs, Iwi and Māori organisations, business associations, academics and researchers, international organisations, and other government agencies not previously contacted, to seek further information, and in many cases, [to set up an engagement](#).

Since then, the Inquiry has so far met with more than 1200 people across government, education, business, health, and charities and social services sectors, as well as representatives from different Iwi and from communities around New Zealand. The Inquiry has held meetings in Christchurch, Gisborne, Northland, Hamilton, Auckland, Queenstown, and Wellington so far, as well as numerous online engagements with people around Aotearoa New Zealand. These meetings are continuing to run alongside the public submissions process.

As well as the experiences gathered through public consultation, this information will be used to inform the Inquiry’s findings and recommendations in its final report, which is due on 30 September [2024](#).

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Royal Commission COVID-19 Lessons

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