



## COVID-19 Inquiry Pānui

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### A word from our Chair, Professor Tony Blakely



Kia ora koutou,

As many of you will know, our focus throughout February and March was on hearing from as many New Zealanders as possible about their experiences of COVID-19 and how we might be able to learn from those experiences for the future.

I'm pleased to share that we heard from a diverse range of New Zealanders. We received nearly 13,000 submissions during our public

consultation period which ran from 8 February to 24 March.

Thank you to everyone who made a submission. All New Zealanders, both here and overseas, were significantly impacted by the pandemic – and sharing these experiences isn't always easy. These submissions are of tremendous value to the work of the Inquiry as we look to learn the lessons from COVID-19 to prepare for future pandemics.

As well as seeking your submissions online, we also held a wide range of direct engagements across New Zealand during this time. This included meeting with community groups, young people, secondary school and tertiary students, refugees, members of the disabled community, small business owners and workers, Iwi, and people from a wide range of communities more generally. You might have also spotted the Inquiry at key events around the country like A&P shows, festivals, and markets. We really appreciated the time that people took to talk with us and to make a submission.

New Zealanders also had the chance to share their feedback on the Inquiry's terms of reference during this consultation period. This feedback has been provided to the Department of Internal Affairs and will be used to inform any changes that the Government decides to make. Many of you will have seen that a decision on these changes is included in the Prime Minister's recently announced 90-day plan, so we expect to know what an expanded terms of reference for the Inquiry might include by the end of June 2024.

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Inquiry. We look forward to sharing more of our updates and progress with you over the coming months.

Heoi ano ra,



Professor Tony Blakely

Royal Commission Chair

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## Submissions received from a wide and diverse range of New Zealanders

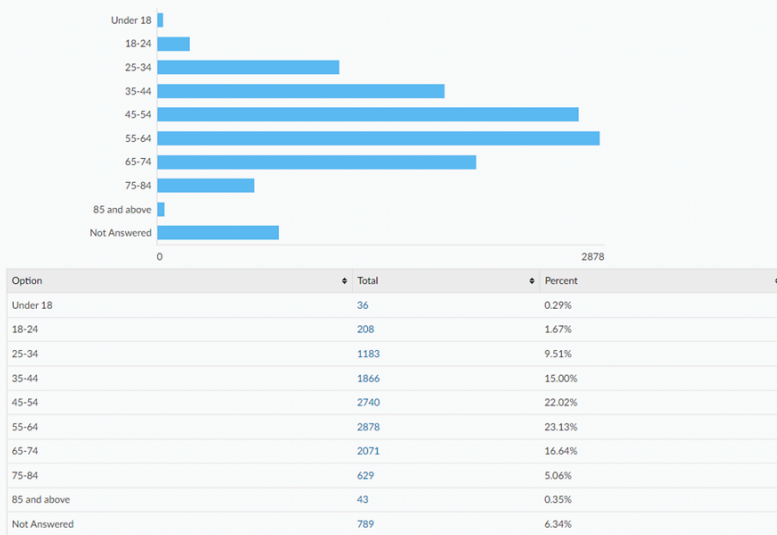


The recent round of public consultation saw the Inquiry receive almost 13,000 submissions.

Hearing from the public is vital to the work of the Inquiry, and we are very grateful to everyone who shared their COVID-19 experience with us.

During the submissions period, the Inquiry heard from people all around Aotearoa New Zealand (including the Chatham Islands) as well as from New Zealanders overseas. We received around 25% of submissions from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

The Inquiry received submissions from all age groups. The highest number of submissions came from those aged 55 to 64 (23 percent of submissions), while the lowest number of submissions came from those aged 18 and under (0.29 percent of submissions).



More women than men submitted to the Inquiry. Just under 57 percent of submitters identify as women and 35 percent identify as men. Two percent identify as gender diverse, and the remainder preferred not to answer.

Twenty-four percent of submissions were from essential workers, defined as people who could leave their homes to go to work during Level 4 lockdowns.

We received submissions from members of over 18 different ethnic groups, with the majority coming from NZ European/Pākehā (74 percent), followed by NZ Māori (9 percent). Submitters could select more than one ethnicity.

While demographic questions were optional, over 90 percent of respondents chose to answer them.

The experiences shared with the Inquiry covered a broad range of areas. We heard how people were impacted by COVID-19 measures, like vaccine mandates and border closures, as well as how the pandemic impacted life events like births and deaths. We received many insights that will help fulfill the Inquiry's work of learning from the COVID-19 pandemic to prepare for future pandemics.

The submissions we received are now being considered and analysed, along with publicly available information and information gathered

from engagements with organisations and individuals. All the information we've gathered and received will inform the Inquiry's final report.

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## Engagement around Aotearoa continues

Alongside public submissions, the Inquiry continued to hold direct engagements around Aotearoa New Zealand.

We met with a number of community groups around the country, including representatives from community support organisations, older people, refugees, and young people. The Inquiry also visited correctional facilities to speak with incarcerated people. These direct engagements support the Inquiry's goal to hear from as many different community groups as possible. The Inquiry also attended several public events, including A&P shows and festivals, during February and March.



## The Inquiry so far

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 I Te Tira Ārai Urutā 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.

The Inquiry first identified and sourced publicly available information. More recently, the Inquiry contacted a wide range of organisations and institutions to seek further information, and in many cases, to set up an engagement.

Since then, the Inquiry has met with more than 1500 people across government, education, business, health, and charities and social services sectors, as well as representatives from different Iwi and communities around New Zealand. The Inquiry has held meetings in Christchurch, Dunedin, Gisborne, Hastings, Northland, Hamilton, Auckland, Queenstown, Tauranga, Porirua and Wellington so far, as well as numerous online engagements with people around Aotearoa New Zealand.

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.

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