

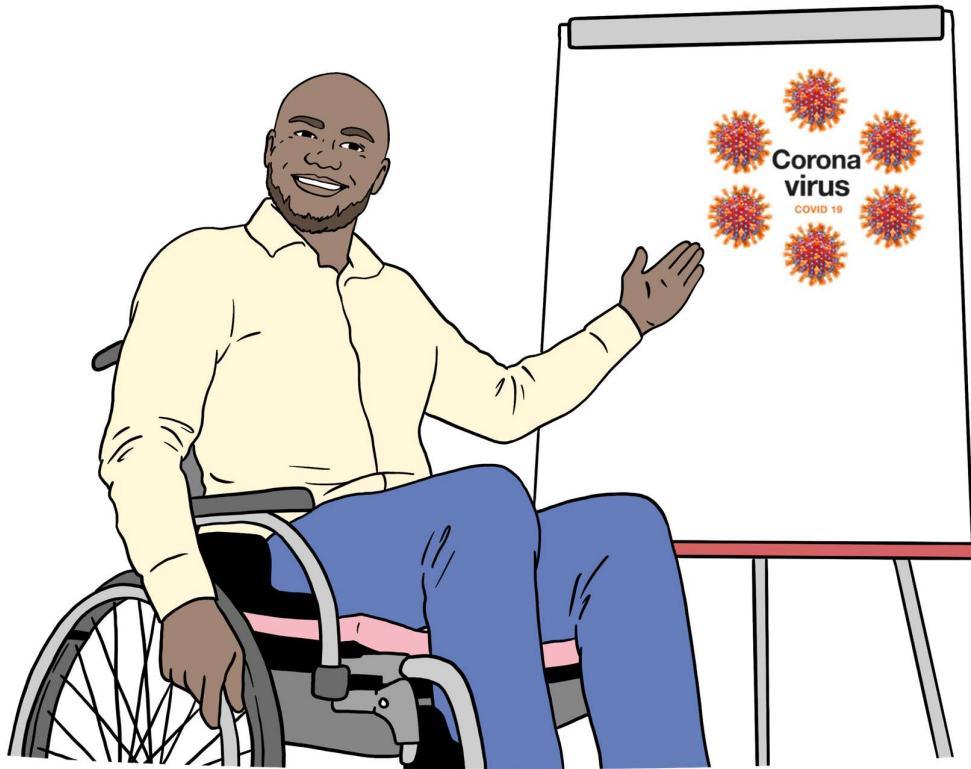


TE TIRA ĀRAI URUTĀ

## NZ ROYAL COMMISSION COVID-19 LESSONS LEARNED



# Lessons learned from COVID-19: Phase 2 public hearings

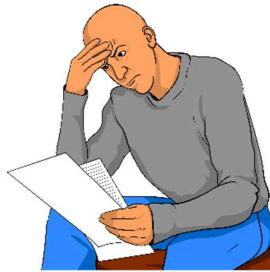


Published: December 2025

# Before you start



This is a long document.



It can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:



- read it a few pages at a time
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.

# What you will find in this document

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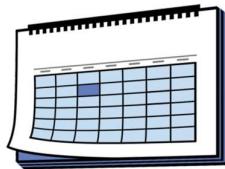


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# What this Easy Read is about



This Easy Read document is about  
**Phase 2** of the work the **Royal  
Commission of Inquiry into  
COVID-19 Lessons Learned –  
Te Tira Ārai Urutā** is doing.



Here **Phase 2** means part 2.



In this document the **Royal  
Commission of Inquiry into  
COVID-19 Lessons Learned –  
Te Tira Ārai Urutā** will be called  
the **Royal Commission**.



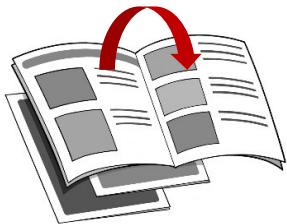
The Royal Commission is a group of people who learned about things that happened during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.



**COVID-19** is a type of virus that makes people sick.



A **pandemic** is when many people around the world get the same sickness at the same time.



We tell you more about what the Royal Commission is on **page 9** of this document.

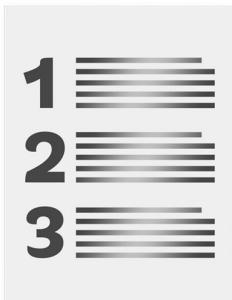


When you see the words **we / us / ours** in this document it means the Royal Commission.



This Easy Read document:

- tells you about Phase 2 of our work
- is a **summary** of the **public hearings** held in July 2025.



Here a **summary**:

- is shorter than the full report document
- tells you the main ideas.



Here **public hearings** are when the Royal Commission:

- held meetings
- and
- asked people / groups what they thought about what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.





The Government asked the Royal Commission to get more **feedback** from New Zealanders about the COVID-19 pandemic response.



**Feedback** means saying what you think about something.



The Government asked the Royal Commission to:



- look into new things about the COVID-19 pandemic
- find out more information about some of the things in Phase 1.

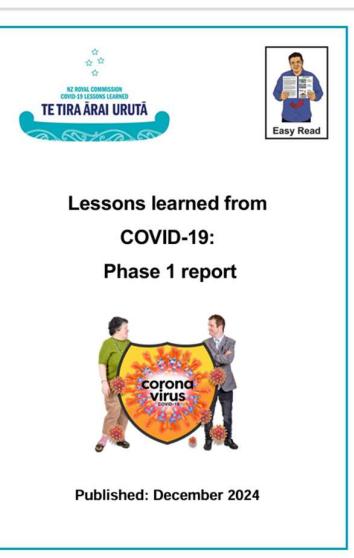


There are 2 phases to this work:

- Phase 1

and

- Phase 2.



You can read about Phase 1 in the report called **Lessons learned from COVID-19: Phase 1** at this website:

<https://tinyurl.com/C19ReportPhase1>

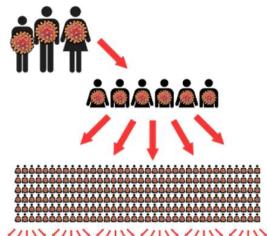
# What is the Royal Commission?



The Royal Commission was announced by the Government in 2022.



It is a group of people learning about things that happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The work of the Royal Commission is to find things out about the pandemic so the country can be ready if other pandemics happen.



To do this they have looked at lots of information.



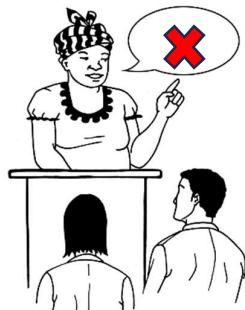
They have also asked people to talk about what happened to them during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Royal Commission is not part of the Government.



The Government can ask the Royal Commission what to look at.



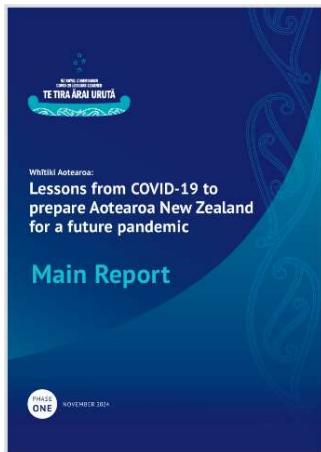
The Government cannot tell the Royal Commission what should go into their reports.



As part of their work the Royal Commission tells the Government what they find out.

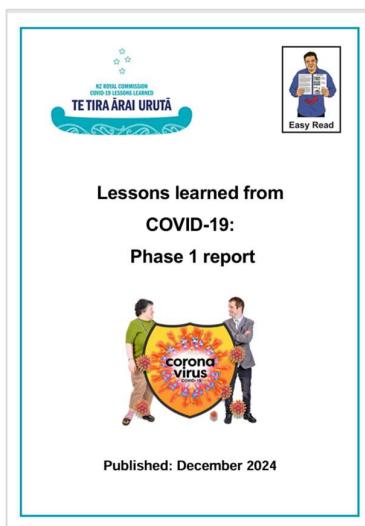


The first report came out in 2024.



You can read the first report  
**Lessons from COVID-19 to prepare  
Aotearoa New Zealand for a future  
pandemic** at this **website**:

<https://tinyurl.com/2hhm88kw>



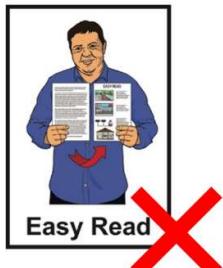
You can read the Easy Read  
summary of this report called  
**Lessons learned from COVID-19:  
Phase 1** at this **website**:

<https://tinyurl.com/C19ReportPhase1>



You can find more information about  
the Royal Commission at this  
**website**:

[www.covid19lessons.royalcommission.nz](http://www.covid19lessons.royalcommission.nz)



This website is **not** in Easy Read.

## Phase 2



At the end of 2024 the Government asked the Royal Commission to look into some new things.



This part of our work is called **Phase 2.**



Phase 2 of our inquiry is looking at how the Government managed the COVID-19 pandemic when using:



- **lockdowns**
- **vaccines**
- **vaccine mandates**
- COVID-19 testing.





**Lockdown** was when the Government asked everyone to stay at home so they did not get sick.



A **vaccine** is a medicine that can help stop you from getting very sick.

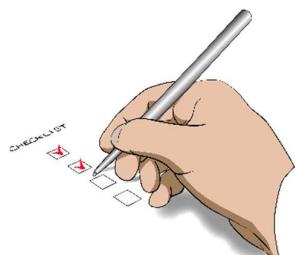


**Vaccine mandates** are when people have to get a vaccine to do something like their job.



The Government wanted to know:

- what went well
- what did not go well
- what things can be done to make things better if there is another pandemic.





To find out what people thought about these things the Royal Commission:



- held a week of public hearings to ask people what they thought

- got more information about what happened during the pandemic

- had meetings with:

- the Government
- community groups
- businesses.



We will make a report about our Phase 2 work by **26 February 2026.**

# Public hearings



The Royal Commission held public hearings to find out how different people / groups experienced the pandemic.



The public hearings were also a way for people to find out more about the information the Royal Commission was collecting.



Each person / group made recommendations about how to do things better if there is another pandemic.



A **recommendation** is an idea about a good thing to do.



We held the public hearings in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland to find out how the lockdowns worked for people.



More people were affected by lockdowns in:

- Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
- and
- Te Tai Tokerau Northland.



The Royal Commission wanted to find out more information about the people who lived in these 2 areas.





You can find out more about these public hearings at this **website**:

<https://tinyurl.com/2snbfm45>



There is information about:

- the people who spoke at the public hearings
- videos of the public hearings with captions
- a link to summaries of the public hearings in different languages.



This website is **not** in Easy Read.

## Day 1 of public hearings



On Day 1 the Royal Commission heard from organisations that support businesses in Aotearoa New Zealand.



These organisations said:

- it was hard for businesses to be in lockdown
- many business owners:
  - worried about money
  - felt very upset being in lockdown
- many businesses found Government rules hard to understand.





Businesses said they were happy with most of the support the Government gave them.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:

- work closely with businesses:



- when planning for a pandemic
- during a pandemic



- put in support that works for different:

- parts of the country
- kinds of businesses
- industries / groups of businesses that do the same kind of work.



## Day 2 of public hearings



The Royal Commission heard from 5 groups on Day 2.



### **What the Care and Responsibility Under Lockdown (CARUL) Collective said**



The collective is a group of **social science** experts from around the world.



**Social science** is the study of:

- the way humans do things
- human relationships.



This group told us people:

- supported lockdowns when they could understand the need for them
- did not support lockdowns when they had no choice.



This group told us if a pandemic happens again the Government should:



- have better social support services in place
- have better support services for mental health
- support people to have the money they need:
  - during lockdowns
  - after lockdowns when extra money is needed.





This group also said if a pandemic happens again the Government should listen to lots of people about how to keep people safe.



Doing this will make sure more people:



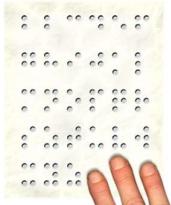
- are listened to
- are part of making important decisions about their community
- feel a part of their community.



## What the disabled community and their whānau / family and carers said



This group told us they found it hard to get information in a way they could understand.



There was not enough information available in alternate formats for disabled people like:



- Braille
- Easy Read
- New Zealand Sign Language.



Disabled people also said there were many times when there were not enough care staff to support them.



This meant family and community groups had to step in to support them.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should make sure disabled people take part in:



- planning
- decision making.



## What the general practice sector said

A **general practice** is where a general practitioner / family doctor works.



General practitioners / doctors told us early lockdowns were the right thing to do.



They were able to make changes quickly to care for their patients.



General practitioners / doctors supported vaccine mandates.



They also said it was hard to put vaccine mandates in place.



This group said if a pandemic happens again **trusted people** should support the Government to give out information about the pandemic.



**Trusted people** means people who:

- work in healthcare like doctors
- are respected members of an iwi.



Doing this will support people to:

- understand why they need a vaccine
- feel better about getting a vaccine.





## What older people said

This group told us lockdowns were hard for older people:



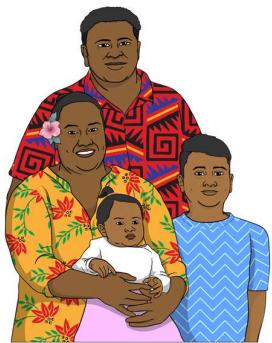
- living alone
- who were not able to use things like:
  - computers
  - the internet.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should give people free **rapid antigen tests (RATs)**.



**Rapid antigen tests (RATs)** are tests people can use at home to find out if they have a virus like COVID-19.



## What the Pacific community said

This group told us Pacific communities got sick more often from COVID-19 than many other groups.



This was because there were already some things making it hard for Pacific communities like:



- social problems like not having a healthy place to live
- not having enough money
- health problems.





This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:



- work with trusted Pacific leaders to share messages about how to keep safe
- do things for Pacific communities like have information in Pacific languages
- sort out problems in ways that work for Pacific communities.



## Day 3 of public hearings



The Royal Commission heard from 5 groups on Day 3.



### What Auckland ethnic communities said



**Ethnic** means a group of people who share things like:

- language
- the way they do things
- their culture.



This group told us their problems were about things like:



- not getting the information they needed
- getting information that was sometimes not true
- not having much information in other languages.



Communities felt they could not wait for the Government to do something.

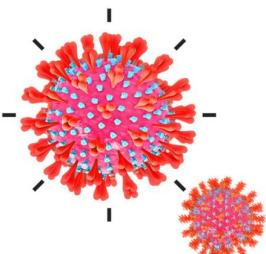


Some decided to work together.



Pacific and Asian communities worked together to:

- make their own resources
- run their own pandemic responses.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should make sure all communities can:

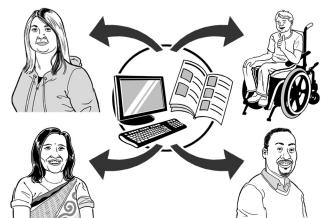


- get the information they need in a way they can understand
- get ready to make changes needed to keep their people safe.

## What Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland Council said



Auckland Council told us they had to do a lot of things to support people until Government support started.



They said they used lots of different ways like social media to get information to communities.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:

- build good relationships with communities
- let local government like councils make more decisions during a pandemic.





## What Māori health and social service providers said

Māori providers told us that many Māori did not trust the Government.



Lockdowns made Māori lose trust in the Government even more.

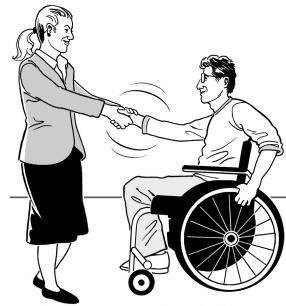


This group thought the rules about vaccinations:

- did not work well for Māori
- did not support Māori to have **self-determination**
- led to Māori workers losing their jobs if they were not vaccinated.



Here **self-determination** means Māori having control over their own lives.



This group said lockdown worked well for Māori when the Government worked with places like councils to make:



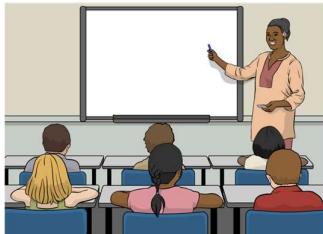
- strong relationships with community groups
- ways to sort out problems that worked for different cultures like Māori.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:



- work well with Māori
- build trust with Māori.

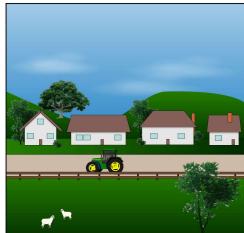


## What the education sector said

This group told us many students did not have the things they needed to take part in online classes.



Students were more likely to be badly affected if they:



- did not have enough money
- lived in the country
- did not have:
  - computers
  - ways to use the internet.





This group also said school principals became very important community leaders in lockdowns by:

- supporting their communities when the Government was not doing so
- giving people the information they needed about the pandemic.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should make sure:



- all students:
  - can use the internet
  - have devices like computers to work on
- school principals take part in pandemic planning.





## What young people said

This group told the Royal Commission lockdowns were hard for young people.



They found it hard not being able to:

- catch up with their friends.
- do all the classes they could do at school.

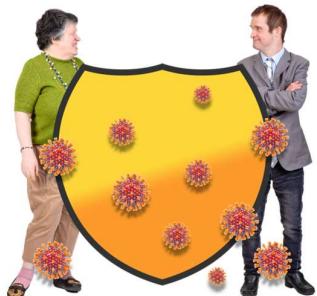


This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should make better ways to support young people.

## Day 4 of public hearings



The Royal Commission heard from 3 groups on Day 4.



### What vaccine safety advocacy groups said

This group told us the Government:



- did not think about the **human rights** of people who were worried about having the vaccine
- made some people lose trust in:
  - the Government
  - medical / health care like hospitals.





**Human rights** are things the law says every person should:

- have
- be able to do.



Rights are things like being able to:

- make choices about your health
- get the healthcare you need.



This group told us:

- some people were worried about how quickly the first vaccine by Pfizer was made
- they did not think the Government messages about the **side-effects** of the vaccine were clear.





**Side-effects** are when something you do not expect happens to your body when you:

- have a vaccine
- take medicine.

Side-effects:

- do not happen very often
- are sometimes bad.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:

- explain why vaccines are made so quickly
- let people who are worried about getting a vaccine have different treatment choices.



## What misinformation and disinformation groups said



**Misinformation and disinformation**  
mean information that:

- is fake / not true
- tries to make you believe something that is not true.

This group felt there needed to be ways to stop people getting / believing:



- misinformation
- disinformation
- information about **conspiracy theories.**

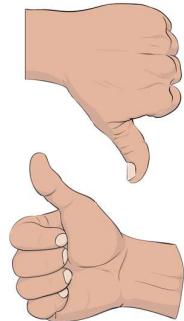


**Conspiracy theories** are when:

- something big has happened
- and
- people make up a story about how it happened that is not true.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should make things to support people to tell if information is:



- fake
- true.



## What the vaccine science research group said

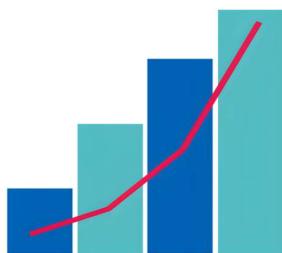


Here **research** is where a person / group finds out a lot of information.

This group said the COVID-19 vaccine is very safe.



They said COVID-19 vaccine side-effects do not happen very often.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:

- make decisions using **scientific evidence**
- have ways to check how many people have bad side-effects from getting the vaccines.





Here **scientific evidence** is true information that supports people to make decisions about how to manage something like a pandemic.

# Day 5 of public hearings



On Day 5 the Royal Commission heard from:

- 3 groups of people
- 1 person about how people should be told about the vaccine.



## What the group from mandated industries said



**Mandated industries** are industries / places that need to follow the rules the Government has made like:



- schools
- hospitals
- places that run public transport like buses.



This group told us extra planning was needed for disabled communities:

- to keep getting the support they needed in a pandemic
- to find safe ways to get the support they needed.



This group told us small businesses like restaurants and cafes found it hard to:



- understand the mandate rules
- follow the mandate rules.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should work with industries to:



- make clear guidelines about what to do in a pandemic
- make sure good support can be put in place for businesses.



## What the group from the nursing and midwifery sector said

This group told us:



- **midwives** supported lockdowns as they kept:

- them safe from COVID-19
- their clients safe from COVID-19

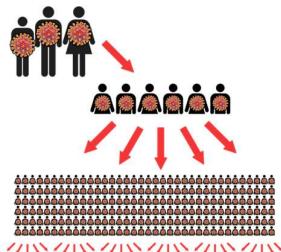


- nurses told us the pandemic was very hard because:

- it was very stressful
- there was a lot of work to do.



**Midwives** are trained health workers who support people when they are having a baby.



This group said if a pandemic happens again the Government should:

- make a New Zealand **Centre for Disease Control**
- make sure the healthcare sector has enough money to care for patients / people in a pandemic.



**A Centre for Disease Control** is a place that finds out how to protect people by stopping:

- diseases spreading to lots of people
- people getting diseases.



## **What the group from research perspectives on mandates said**

The people in this group were:



- Professor Michael Plank from Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha – University of Canterbury



- Professor Denise Wilson from Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau – Auckland University of Technology.



Professor Plank told us that **models** he worked on showed that if there had been no vaccine there would have been:



- 6 thousand 5 hundred more deaths from COVID-19
- 45 thousand more people having to go to hospital.



Here **models** are tools that show what might happen in a pandemic like how many people could:

- get a virus
- die if they get a virus.



Professor Plank said if a pandemic happens again more money should be used to model what might happen.



Professor Wilson said most people they talked to about mandates:

- thought vaccines were a good idea



but

- said mandates made their lives harder.



She said if there is a pandemic again the Government should think about how mandates can work in a good way for people.



## **What Associate Professor Petousis-Harris said about how information was given about the vaccine**



Professor Petousis-Harris is:

- a researcher in medical and health sciences
- an expert in vaccines.



She told us vaccinations are a very good public health tool as they mean:

- fewer people have to go to hospital
- the healthcare system can keep working.





She said if there is a pandemic again the Government should make sure:



- people understand how vaccines work before there is a pandemic
- there are good ways to get the right information to people about what is happening.

## What will happen next?



The Royal Commission has now finished getting the information we need for Phase 2 of our work.



We will write a report about what we:

- have found out
- recommend the Government should do to prepare for another pandemic.



We will think about all the information we have when we write the report.



On 26 February 2026 the report will be given to the **Governor-General**.



The **Governor-General** is an important person in New Zealand who does jobs for the King who lives in England.



The Government will:

- let people know about the report
- put the report on its website
- decide how to follow the recommendations.



This information has been written by the NZ Royal Commission COVID-19 Lessons Learned Te Tira Ārai Urutā.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



The ideas in this document are not the ideas of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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