

Royal Commission Report:  
1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025



Overall summary

The January to March quarter saw the Inquiry complete all remaining establishment tasks and begin the analysis of the first tranche of public submissions and the material provided by government agencies in response to our section 20 production orders.

The April to June quarter will see us: finish the analysis of that material; complete the interviews we have planned with decision makers, advisors and subject matter experts; and undertake a number of engagements with stakeholders and community groups. In turn the July to September quarter will see us hold two sets of hearings, complete all other outstanding information and evidence gathering tasks, and begin the report writing process in earnest.

Key Streams of Work	Progress this quarter: 1 January to 31 March 2025	Planned for next quarter: 1 April to 30 June 2025
Establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establishment activities are now substantively complete.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Focus has shifted into the information and evidence gathering and research phase.</li></ul>
Information and evidence gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Section 20 production orders:</b> The first tranche of section 20 orders was issued on 16 January 2025, and the bulk of the material covered by the orders provided by 7 March. Work is ongoing with a small number of agencies to clarify matters of scope, or to address confidentiality issues, in order to receive the final batch of section 20 material.</li><li><b>Public submissions:</b> A dedicated public submissions portal was launched on 3 February 2025, and over 4,000 submissions have now been received. The submissions received provide good coverage of regions, ages and other demographic groups. An interim report on the initial analysis and categorisation of the first 1200 submissions has been completed by an external provider.</li><li><b>Direct correspondence:</b> The Inquiry has written to all Phase One submitters – approximately 13,000 individuals – regarding their earlier submissions and either encouraged them to consider a further submission or notified them that their earlier submission will be considered. The Inquiry has seen a corresponding increase in submissions as a result.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Section 20 production orders:</b> All outstanding information requests will be closed, and analysis of the material completed.</li><li><b>Public submissions:</b> The portal closes at midnight on 27 April 2025. An analysis of the submissions will be completed by late-May / early-June 2025.</li><li><b>Direct correspondence:</b> The Inquiry will communicate directly with all individuals who made a submission for Phase Two of the Inquiry (where we have contact information) to acknowledge their submission.</li></ul>
Engagements, Interviews and Hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Engagements:</b> The Inquiry has identified a wide range of stakeholders and communities of interest to meet with to better understand the impacts of pandemic-related decisions. These include the business community, NGOs, academics, peak bodies and community groups.</li><li><b>Interviews:</b> The Inquiry has identified around 25 decision-makers, advisors and experts to interview. More interviews may be required as evidence gathering progresses. A subset of the people interviewed will be asked to appear at a hearing.</li><li><b>Public Hearings:</b> Hearing dates and venues for Auckland (from Monday 7 July) and Wellington (from Wednesday 20 August) have been confirmed. It is expected that the hearings will run for two weeks in total.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Targeted engagements:</b> The Inquiry is intending to hold up to 80 engagements between April and June 2025. The first engagements have now occurred, with the pace expected to ramp up over the rest of the quarter.</li><li><b>Interviews:</b> Interviews have now commenced. Subject to interviewee availability we are aiming to complete the remainder by 31 May 2025.</li><li><b>Public Hearings:</b> Detailed planning for hearings will be advanced.</li></ul>
Communications and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Website:</b> The Inquiry launched its refreshed Phase Two website on 23 January 2025.</li><li><b>Procedural Minute:</b> The Inquiry’s second procedural Minute was published on 17 March 2025 and issued guidance on the Inquiry’s evidence-gathering processes.</li><li><b>Communications and awareness campaign:</b> The Inquiry launched a public awareness campaign on 3 February to encourage submissions. The campaign ‘Were you affected by COVID-19?’ appeared on radio, in print, and on social media and was supported by media interviews with the Inquiry Chair. A further round of media engagement and promotion took place in mid-March to coincide with the submission period mid-point.</li><li><b>Media:</b> A media release was issued on 25 March 2025 to coincide with COVID-19 five-year anniversaries.</li><li><b>Newsletter:</b> The first Phase Two monthly newsletter was issued in January 2025 and an additional issue on 30 March. The newsletter is distributed to around 10,000 subscribers and to media.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Awareness campaign:</b> The campaign continues with a focus on an expanded social media presence and a further round of print media interviews.</li><li><b>Newsletter:</b> Further issues of the newsletter will be published in April, May and June 2025.</li><li><b>Media release:</b> A further media release, from the Chair, to encourage people to make a submission is due on Wednesday 23 April.</li></ul>

Financial performance

Expenditure year to date (January to March 2025) is slightly below budget:

- Phase Two of the Inquiry has incurred costs to date of \$2.703 million, against a full year budget of \$5.889 million as set out in the table. A small underspend is expected this year and is intended to be carried forward into Financial year 2025/26.
- The total budget for Phase Two is \$14.038 million across 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- The Inquiry is forecast to complete Phase Two work within the agreed budget envelope.

	YTD Actual (end March)	Budget		Whole of Life
	2024/25 \$million	2024/25 \$million	2025/26 \$million	2024 - 26 \$million
Controllable expenditure - operations	1.628	4.021	5.954	9.975
Overhead expenditure - support	0.716	1.268	1.605	2.783
Commissioner costs	0.359	0.600	0.590	1.190
Total Expenditure	2.703	5.889	8.149	14.038

Indicators of progress

Indicators	Progress	Commentary
Indicator: Inquiry Phase 2 Establishment activities	Complete	Complete. At 31 March 2025 we had 19 people, or 18.25 FTE.
Indicator: Gathering information and evidence	Amber	Underway. Receipt of late Section 20 production order information is under active management.
Indicator: Engagements, interviews and hearings	Green	On track. Engagement design and planning complete, with implementation in April.
Indicator: Analysis of information and evidence	Green	Underway. The analysis of information received is progressing well, with preliminary ‘lines of inquiry’ identified.
Delivery of the Inquiry’s final report by 26 February 2026	Green	On track.
Delivery of the Inquiry’s work programme within the budget provided by Government	Green	Expenditure is on track. Detailed budgeting for remainder of Inquiry has been completed.

**RAG:** Green: On track. Amber: Off track but impacts mitigated. Red: Off track, and further mitigation required.

At a glance

4387 Public Submissions Received

Interviews at 22 April 2025

4	completed*
8	scheduled
14	to be confirmed

Section 20 Production Orders

29 Agencies provided material	4 Agencies held no relevant information
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Engagements at 22 April 2025

3	completed*
4	scheduled
~75	to be confirmed

Risks and Issues

Further detailed work programme planning is underway and will be completed in the 1 April to 30 June 2025 quarter. The Inquiry has appointed key personnel with new Counsel assisting and a new Executive Director in place.

The key delivery risks being managed are:

- Delays in the provision of Section 20 material.
- Slippage in the timing of private Interviews due to interviewee availability.