What was the Epidemic Response Committee?

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This special select committee was created to consider the Government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

A cross-party committee was created to consider the Government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Source: Parliamentary Service

What did the committee do?

The Epidemic Response Committee (https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/scl/epidemic-response/) was established on 25 March 2020 to consider and report to the House on matters relating to the Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 alert level 4 remained in place until late April. The committee was disestablished on 26 May 2020.

The cross-party committee met remotely via video-conference every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10am to 12.30pm. The committee meetings were live streamed on Parliament's website and social media, and on-demand versions of these streams were available after each meeting. While the committee was operational, it heard from people across different sectors on a range of topics relating to COVID-19. These included:

- All-of-Government response (31 March)
- Health response (31 March, 7, 14, 22, 29 April)
- Implications for funerals and healthcare (6, 21 May)
- Contact tracing (23 April)
- Controls over borders and freedom of movement (2 April)
- Economic activity (1, 14, 16, 23 April, 13, 19 May)
- Business and employment (8, 16, 21, 28 April, 13 May)
- Social impacts (9, 30 April) and implications for faith-based gatherings (21 May)
- Education (9 April, 5 May)
- Media (15 April)
- Sports and events (7 May)
- Trade (16 April)
- Tourism and hospitality (12, 20 May)
- The post-COVID-19 social and economic outlook (23 April)
- Outlook for the election (21 May)

The committee was chaired by the Leader of the Opposition and consisted of 11 members in total, six of whom were Opposition members. The members of the committee were:

- Hon Simon Bridges, Chairperson (National Party)
- Kiritapu Allan (Labour Party)
- Hon Paula Bennett (National Party)
- Marama Davidson (Green Party)
- Hon Ruth Dyson (Labour Party)
- Hon Paul Goldsmith (National Party)
- Dr Shane Reti (National Party)
- David Seymour (ACT Party)
- Fletcher Tabuteau (NZ First Party)
- Michael Wood (Labour Party)
- Hon Michael Woodhouse (National Party)

A number of other members of Parliament participated in the committee's hearings at various stages, depending on the topic.

Why was the committee needed?

A function of Parliament is to hold the Government to account and to provide scrutiny over its policies and actions. All parties not in Government have the opportunity to provide this scrutiny during debates in the House, and by asking Ministers oral and written questions.

As Parliament was not meeting while New Zealand was at alert level 4 (https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/features/faq-parliament-during-covid-19-alert-level-4/), the Epidemic Response Committee provided this scrutiny over the Government's response to the COVID-19

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outbreak.

The committee also examined two urgent pieces of legislation: the *COVID-19 Response (Further Management Measures) Legislation Bill* and the *Immigration (COVID-19 Response) Amendment Bill.* The committee heard from submitters on 8 May about the proposals in these bills, and then reported with suggested amendments to the bills.

Learn more about these laws here. (https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/history-and-buildings/special-topics/epidemic-response-committee-covid-19-2020/legislation-referred-to-the-epidemic-response-committee/)

Check out the submissions received by the committee here. (https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/history-and-buildings/special-topics/epidemic-response-committee-covid-19-2020/submissions-and-advice/)

Read the committee's reports here. (https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/history-and-buildings/special-topics/epidemic-response-committee-covid-19-2020/reports/)

RELATED LINKS

Click here to watch the debate on creating the committee
(https://www.parliament.nz/en/watch-parliament/ondemand)

What's been said in Parliament about the Epidemic Response Committee?
(https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/combined/HansDeb_20200325_20200325_24)

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