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Parliament's MPs appear united against protesters camped outside

Thomas Manch · 20:19, Feb 09 2022

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Protesters sing the national anthem while gathered at Parliament.

MPs from all political parties appear united in their disapproval of **anti-government and anti-vaccine mandate protesters** who have camped out on Parliament's lawns.

The protesters, who arrived outside Parliament on Tuesday afternoon and set up about 50 tents, continued to demonstrate on Wednesday as about 100 police officers surrounded the entrance to Parliament and a trespass notice was served.

P No MPs, from any political party, have walked on to the forecourt to speak to the protesters, as often occurs when organised protests reach Parliament.

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ROBERT KITCHIN/STUFF

After a show of force early on in the protest, police have taken a less confrontational approach.

Inside Parliament on Wednesday, National Party Covid-19 spokesman Chris Bishop said the protesters denied “the **fundamental science behind vaccination**”, which was something MPs could not support.

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“That is why you don't see any MPs out there ... talking to them, because they don't want to give succour to the protesters,” he said.

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“We fundamentally as a Parliament believe in the science of vaccination and it is really important that we stand collectively together to send that message.”

Bishop said he knew people in the crowd from the electorate he was based in, Hutt South.

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KEVIN STENT/STUFF

An anti mandate protester walks the police line at Parliament on Wednesday.

“It is tough to ... have people out there in such disagreement with, you know, the vast bulk of New Zealanders.

“But at the end of the day, they have the right to protest. They have the right to free speech, we acknowledge that.

“I just ask that they do that in a respectful way because there are Wellingtonians out there trying to go about their normal business, go to work ... and they are being stymied from doing that by some of the protests.”

National Party leader Christopher Luxon said he did not support the protests outside Parliament.

“I do think everyone deserves a right to protest but I think when it is becoming quite anti-social and abusive, that is a big problem.

“When roads are getting blocked up, emergency services can't get through, you can't drop your kids off to school, that's a different situation.”

KEVIN STENT

A protester stands in front of a police line on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said New Zealanders had a right to protest.

“But New Zealanders also have the right to be vaccinated and the right to be kept as safe as possible in a pandemic, and that is exactly what we are focused on.”

Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said the protesters appeared “deeply unhappy about a whole range of things”.

“It is difficult to identify exactly what the cause is sometimes.”

Māori Party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer said her party supported activism and protest, which was the foundation of a lot of political movement.

“What we don't support is poor behaviour. I think there are a few [in the protest] that have to take check of that.

“I went for my walk this morning and spoke to some of the whānau, they were having a kai, they were chilled as. But sadly, that is not the behaviour ... of some.”

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