

[NEW ZEALAND \(/NEWS/NATIONAL\)](#) / [COVID-19 \(/NEWS/COVID\)](#)

Photo essay: The anti-mandate occupation of Parliament's grounds, then and now

6:16 am on 3 July 2022

Photo essay - Four months ago police forcibly ended a 23 day anti-mandate occupation at Parliament's grounds. The grounds were badly damaged but have now been restored as you can see in these before and after photos.



 A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502949)

The occupation of Parliament's grounds began on 8 February (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461072/anti-vaccine-mandate-protest-convoy-arrives-at-parliament>) when hundreds of protesters travelled to Wellington from around the country in a convoy made up of cars, campervans, trucks and other vehicles.

Two days later (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461228/police-say-anti-mandate-protest-at-parliament-unprecedented>), police were describing the protest as "unprecedented" and predicting that it could take days to remove the anti-mandate protesters from Parliament's lawn.

The protest disrupted nearby schools and shops

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/business/461507/businesses-near-parliament-struggling-with-anti-vaccine-mandate-protest-on-doorstep>) with Victoria University

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461531/anti-vaccine-mandate-protests-victoria-university-of-wellington-supports-police-tactics>) forced to close its city campus and security guards having to escort children to and from their school grounds.

It also caused huge disruption to traffic around Parliament.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502750)



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502954)

Two weeks (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461906/we-want-our-streets-back-wellington-mayor-angry-as-protest-continues>) into the protest police estimated that 800 vehicles remained illegally parked in and around Parliament, with 450 parking spaces at Sky Stadium that were made available to the crowd full.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502770)

The number of protesters occupying Parliament grounds often swelled on the weekends, with Wellington District Commander Superintendent Corrie Parnell (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461403/police-appeal-to-protesters-at-parliament-to-clear-the-streets>) estimating there were about 3000 protesters on the weekend of 13-14 February.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502763)

Most politicians refused to meet with the protesters, although ACT Party leader David Seymour (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/461672/act-leader-david-seymour-meets-with-protesters-time-for-a-mature-de-escalation>) and ACT MP Nicole McKee, along with New Zealand First leader (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/462298/the-week-in-politics-ardern-luxon-peters-and-the-protesters>) Winston Peters did meet with the group.

[Photo essay: Parliament grounds occupation on 13 February](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461421/photo-essay-parliament-grounds-occupation)

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✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502887)

Parliament grounds were damaged with the large numbers of tents and people camped out there.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502780)

Speaker Trevor Mallard also turned on Parliament's sprinklers (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461291/covid-19-omicron-outbreak-anti-mandate-protest-s-fourth-day-at-parliament>) all night as the protest entered its fourth day causing some to dig trenches to redirect the water into nearby drains.

By day 11 of the protest police were still refusing to take enforcement action against protesters (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461801/enforcement-action-against-parliament-protesters-could-lead-to-violence-coster>) for fear it would lead to violence. Police did install concrete barriers (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/checkpoint/audio/2018831408/faeces-thrown-at-police-at-parliament-protest>) in an attempt to restore some of the streets around Parliament on 21 February.

By 27 February police were warning of deteriorating conditions (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/462384/protest-at-parliament-grounds-this-is-not-a-safe-place-police>) within Parliament grounds and urging people to stay away from the protest due to "extremely poor" sanitary conditions, aggressive behaviour and the presence of Covid-19.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502824)

On 2 March (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/462610/parliament-grounds-reclaimed-police-operation-ends-23-day-protest>), 23 days after the protesters first occupied Parliament grounds, police launched an early morning operation at Parliament and the surrounding areas "to restore order and access to the area".

During the afternoon fires were lit, there were explosions, weapons were used against police, officers were injured and there were arrests.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502811)

By 6pm, police had cleared Molesworth Street of all protester vehicles. They had arrested 65 people - that number would reach 87 by late Wednesday - and towed 50 vehicles.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502794)

On 2 March, Assistant Police Commissioner Richard Chambers told *Checkpoint* that Parliament Grounds had been reclaimed after 23 days of occupation.

That evening, Speaker of Parliament Trevor Mallard said in a statement that Parliament's grounds would be closed until further notice but that they would be restored.



✳️ A Flourish data visualization (https://flourish.studio/?utm_source=showcase&utm_campaign=visualisation/10502789)

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Parliament's grounds were officially reopened

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/469696/parliament-precinct-officially-reopens-after-repairs-following-occupation-riots>) to the public on 23 June following months of repair.