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**(Beehive, 2024d)**  
**[25 Jun 2024]**

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25 JUNE 2024

# Next phase of the Royal Commission into COVID-19



**HON BROOKE VAN VELDEN**(/MINISTER/HON-BROOKE-VAN-VELDEN)

Internal Affairs (/portfolio/nationalactnew-zealand-first-coalition-government-2023-2026/internal-affairs)

Minister of Internal Affairs Brooke van Velden says this coalition Government is delivering on our commitment to expand the terms of reference for the independent Royal Commission into COVID-19 Lessons Learned.

**P** “There will be a second phase to the Royal Commission which features new commissioners and an expanded terms of reference. It will focus on matters of ongoing public concern including vaccine efficacy and safety, the extended lockdowns in Auckland and Northland, and the extent of disruption to New Zealanders’ health, education, and business,” says Ms van Velden.

The Royal Commission into COVID-19 Lessons Learned was established in December 2022 with a focus on identifying lessons that can be learned from the COVID-19 experience to strengthen New Zealand’s overall pandemic preparedness. Both the ACT-National and New Zealand First-National coalition agreements include commitments to expanding the inquiry to cover outstanding matters of public concern.

“In January the Government agreed to conduct public consultation on expanding the terms of reference for the Royal Commission. During February and March the Royal Commission received more than 13,000 submissions from the public and these have been considered in the scope of the second phase in inquiry.

“The second phase of the inquiry will begin from November this year and the commissioners will deliver their final report with recommendations in February 2026. Consistent with the New Zealand First-National coalition agreement elements of the second phase of the Inquiry will be conducted in public. This will involve hearing evidence in public when and where it is appropriate to do so.

“The current commissioners, Professor Tony Blakely and John Whitehead, will resign in November after delivering a report on the first phase of the inquiry in November. I will confirm the appointment of new Commissioners, along with the detailed terms of reference, in August.

“Having a second phase of the Royal Commission meets the requirements in both the ACT and New Zealand First coalition agreements while maintaining the integrity of the statutory inquiry system. I am looking forward to the future of the Inquiry and seeing the findings and recommendations made public at the end of the second phase of the Inquiry in early 2026.”

Cabinet has agreed to the below points as an indicative scope of the terms of reference for the second phase;

1. the use of vaccines during the pandemic, specifically, mandates, approval processes and safety including the monitoring and reporting of adverse reactions;
2. the social and economic disruption of New Zealand’s response policies, specifically, the impacts on social division and isolation, health and education, and on inflation, debt and business activity, and the balance of these impacts against COVID-19 minimisation and protection goals;
3. extended lockdowns in Auckland and Northland, specifically whether similar public health benefits could have been realised from shorter lockdowns;
4. the utilisation of partnerships with business and professional groups; and
5. the utilisation of new technology, methods, and effective international practices.

