ADDITIONAL DATES SINCE SEPTEMBER 2024

# COVID-19 NATION DATES

A New Zealand timeline of significant events during the COVID-19 pandemic

MCGUINNESS INSTITUTE

## About the cover

The cover design is a pastiche of the visual identity of the New Zealand Government's COVID-19 response. This identity spanned many mediums, from social media posts to the COVID-19 Tracer app, and the design choices – a sans-serif typeface, rounded icons, and warm yellow as the primary colour – made the fast rollout of information clear and disciplined, yet amiable. However, it is perhaps the yellow and white stripes that are most instantly recognisable for those who spent time in New Zealand during the pandemic.

Our cover acknowledges the importance of appropriately employing design to communicate difficult information effectively. The visual identity allowed for easy, seamless updates as the pandemic progressed, and gave assurance that the information was from a reliable source.

## About the McGuinness Institute

The McGuinness Institute is a non-partisan think tank working towards a sustainable future for Aotearoa New Zealand. The Institute applies hindsight, insight and foresight to explore major challenges and opportunities facing Aotearoa New Zealand over the long term. The Institute aims to provide an independent voice and is active in fostering conversations about the long-term impact of current and future decisions. In particular, it encourages young people to become engaged with the future of Aotearoa New Zealand and to have their say. The Institute facilitates educational and awareness-raising workshops on issues of national significance, and encourages participants to share their experiences in ways that contribute to their learning and their own communities.

The Institute believes that understanding history is the key to engaging with the future. Since 2011, the Institute has published four editions of *Nation Dates*, a book of significant events that have shaped the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. *Nation Dates* evolved from a McGuinness Institute research project exploring Aotearoa New Zealand's past. *COVID-19 Nation Dates* uses the *Nation Dates* model to document events in the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information about *COVID-19 Nation Dates*,
visit www.nationdatesnz.org.

For more information about the McGuinness Institute,
visit www.mcguinnessinstitute.org.

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*COVID-19 Nation Dates* was first published 23 March 2023, to commemorate three years from when Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the nation was to move to Alert Level 3 and 48 hours later to Alert Level 4 – a full lockdown.

Second edition first published 25 September 2024. Second print run, 22 October 2024, includes data up to 26 September 2024.

This booklet, *Additional dates since September 2024,* enables the Institute to provide an ongoing commentary since the second edition was published. It will be periodically updated. The contents of this booklet may help inform a third edition in 2026.

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# Contents



**Figures**



**Tables**

**2024**
**28 Nov**

### Royal Commission of Inquiry on the Government’s COVID-19 Response Phase 1 report published

Minister of Internal Affairs Brooke van Velden receives the report from Phase 1 of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned. The report identifies six thematic lessons for the future. These describe the high-level elements Commissioners think are necessary to ensure New Zealand is ‘better prepared for the next pandemic ahead of time, and ready to respond in ways that take care of all aspects of people’s lives’. These lessons, in brief, are set out in Figure A1.1.
*(Beehive, 2024; Royal Commission of Inquiry COVID-19 Lessons Learned, 2024)*

**2025**
**31 Mar**

### 40% of March 2020 MPs remain in the House in March 2025

Only 40% of MPs from 31 March 2020 are still in Parliament as at 31 March 2025. This suggests Parliament is losing its collective knowledge and experience resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of both documented information and the accumulated knowledge of MPs. Figures A1.2–A1.4 suggest that this institutional knowledge has already been significantly eroded.
*(DPMC, 2020; New Zealand Parliament, 2020; 2025; OAG, 2022)*

**2025**
**7 Aug**

### Treasury’s *2025 Long-term Insights Briefing* published

The report acknowledges that ‘New Zealand has seen debt rising in recent decades, partly because responses to adverse shocks have not been matched by savings between shocks’ (see Figure A1.5). The report notes, ‘In the early stages of the pandemic, the Government, supported by the Treasury, prioritised economic objectives above fiscal ones. As the economy recovered in the second half of 2020 and into 2021, the Treasury advised shifting towards more targeted fiscal support and recommended against further stimulus from Budget 2022 onwards.’ It estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic will generate about $66 billion of fiscal costs between the 2020 and 2026 fiscal years, and acknowledges that no comprehensive study has been carried out on the wider non-fiscal costs to the private sector or total economy. In response to the report, on 14 August 2025, Toby Moore, adviser to Minister of Finance Grant Robertson from December 2020, noted that ‘it was clear that Treasury had done limited thinking on how fiscal policy should be used in a crisis’. Moore acknowledged that when Treasury was advising further stimulus was not required, ‘this was very much the Government’s view as well’. However, ‘economic and fiscal forecasts were looking much different from mid-2022 onward’, and, ‘the other side of this story is the fact that forecast tax revenue has continually failed to eventuate.’ As late as October 2022 Treasury was advising the Minister of Finance to increase the allowance for the next Budget from $4.5 billion to $5 billion. Although this advice might seem incongruous, Treasury was trying to tread the same narrow path that the Government was. Infometrics chief executive and principal economist Brad Olsen, suggested that ‘policy makers needed to be more “even-handed” about the pace of movement’ [and that] ‘government and Reserve Bank had rushed into their responses but then been slow to unwind them’. See Figure A1.6.
*(Edmunds, S., 2025; Moore, T., 2025; Treasury, 2025a; 2025b)*

**2025**
**13 Aug**

### Former Ministers refuse to answer Commissioners' questions in public, but will in private

A New Zealand Royal Commission COVID-19 Lessons Learned Inquiry Phase 2 minute notes that former Prime Minister Dame Jacinda Ardern, former Prime Minister Chris Hipkins and former Ministers Grant Robertson and Dr Ayesha Verrall declined to be interviewed during a public hearing planned in late August for the following reasons:

- 'There is a convention that ministers and former ministers are interviewed by inquiries in private; there is no reason for a departure from that convention in this case; and that acting contrary to that convention would undermine rather than enhance public confidence in this instance.
- Because all former ministers had been co-operative in attending interviews and answering questions, repeating such questions at a public hearing would be performative rather than informative.
- Livestreaming and publication of recordings of the hearing creates a risk of those recordings being "tampered with, manipulated or otherwise misused", a risk which the Inquiry "ought to have foreseen and planned for".'

The Commissioners stated, 'We remain of the view that the public being able to see former ministers questioned about those decisions at a public hearing of a Royal Commission of Inquiry would significantly enhance public confidence in our processes.' Nevertheless, 'we consider that proceeding with a "decision-makers" hearing in the absence of the central decision-makers could undermine the public confidence that would otherwise be achieved by hearing evidence in public.' And '[a]fter consideration of each of the above factors, we have decided that proceeding with the August public hearing – either in the absence of former ministers, or with former ministers attending under compulsion – is not justified.' This leads to a public discussion on whether it is acceptable for the former ministers not to appear. Views are mixed. On 18 August 2025, Christopher Luxon claims Labour leader Chris Hipkins is trying to 'politically gaslight' New Zealanders by not appearing at the COVID-19 Inquiry.

*New Zealand Herald* journalist Thomas Coughlan argues that Phase 1 of the inquiry's terms of reference should have included a review of monetary policy decisions and vaccine efficacy and that there was a feeling among NZ First and ACT that the Phase 1 terms of reference 'screwed the scrum in favour of a glowing final report'. Phase 2 reviewed both issues, but over a narrower time frame. A number of journalists note that the risk is that future inquiries become political footballs and inquisitions into the mistakes of their forebears, rather than lessons learned exercises. A lesson may be to gain, where possible, non-partisan agreements on inquiries in the future.

*(Conservative Party, 2025; Coughlan, T., 2025; Hehir, L., 2025; Lyth, J., 2025;* NZ Herald*, 2025; Royal Commission of Inquiry COVID-19 Lessons Learned, 2025)*

# Appendix 1: Figures

**Figure A1.1: Phase 1 of the Inquiry sets out six thematic lessons for the future**

Source: Royal Commission of Inquiry COVID-19 Lessons Learned, 2024

**Lesson 1**: Manage pandemics to look after all aspects of people's lives. In practice, this means:

- **1.1** Put people at the centre of any future pandemic response.
- **1.2** Consider what it means to 'look after all aspects of people's lives' from multiple angles.

**Lesson 2**: Make good decisions. In practice, this means:

- **2.1** Maintain a focus on looking after all aspects of people's lives in pandemic preparedness and response.
- **2.2** Follow robust decision-making processes (to the extent possible during a pandemic).
- **2.3** Use appropriate tools when developing and considering policy response options.
- **2.4** Be responsive to concerns, clear about intentions and transparent about trade-offs.

**Lesson 3**: Build resilience in the health system. In practice, this means:

- **3.1** Build *public health* capacity to increase the range of options available to decision-makers in a pandemic.
- **3.2** Enhance the ***health system's capacity*** to respond to a pandemic without compromising access to health services.

**Lesson 4**: Build resilience in economic and social systems. In practice, this means:

- **4.1** Foster strong economic foundations.
- **4.2** Use economic and social support measures to keep 'normal' life going as much as possible.
- **4.3** Ensure continuous supply of key goods and services.

**Lesson 5**: Work together. In practice, this means:

- **5.1** Work in partnership with Māori.
- **5.2** Work in partnership with communities.
- **5.3** Work closely with the business sector.

**Lesson 6**: Build the foundations. In practice, this means:

- **6.1** Anticipate and manage the risks posed by a future pandemic (alongside other risks).
- **6.2** Have key components of an effective national response in place and ready to be activated

**Figure A1.2: Members of Parliament in March 2020 who remain in or have left Parliament as at June 2025**

Adapted from New Zealand Parliament, 2025

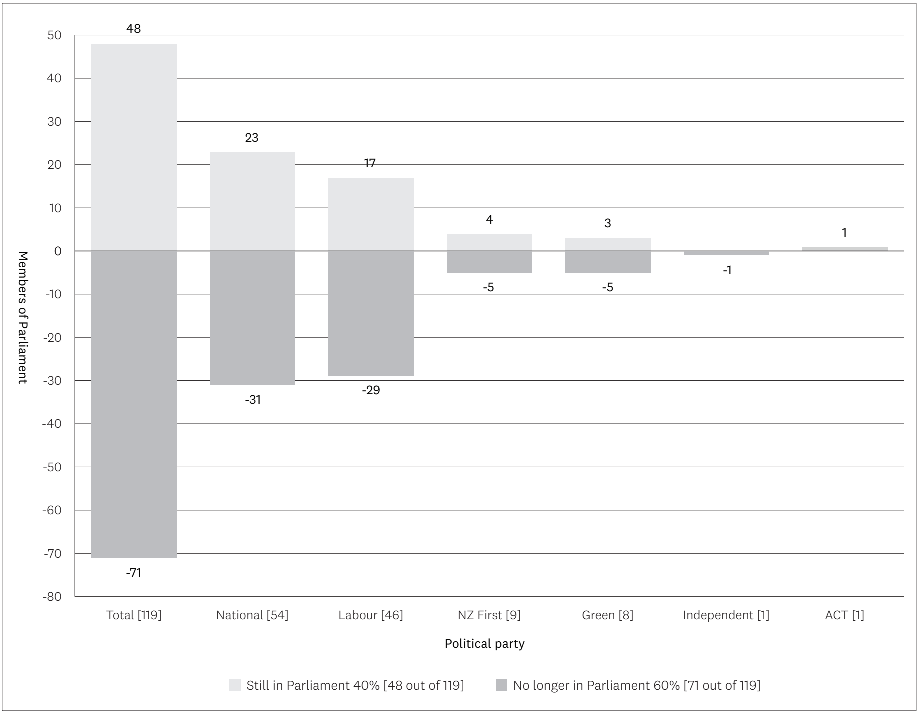



**Figure A1.3: Members of the Epidemic Response Committee in March 2020 who remain in or have left Parliament as at June 2025**

Adapted from New Zealand Parliament, 2020; 2025; OAG, 2022

| Political party | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National | Labour | NZ First | Green | Independent | ACT |
| Paul Goldsmith<br>Dr Shane Reti | | | Marama Davidson | | David Seymour |
| Simon Bridges (chair)<br>Paula Bennett<br>Michael Woodhouse | Kiritapu Allan<br>Ruth Dyson<br>Michael Wood | Fletcher Tabuteau | | | |

Still in Parliament 36% [4 out of 11] No longer in Parliament 64% [7 out of 11]

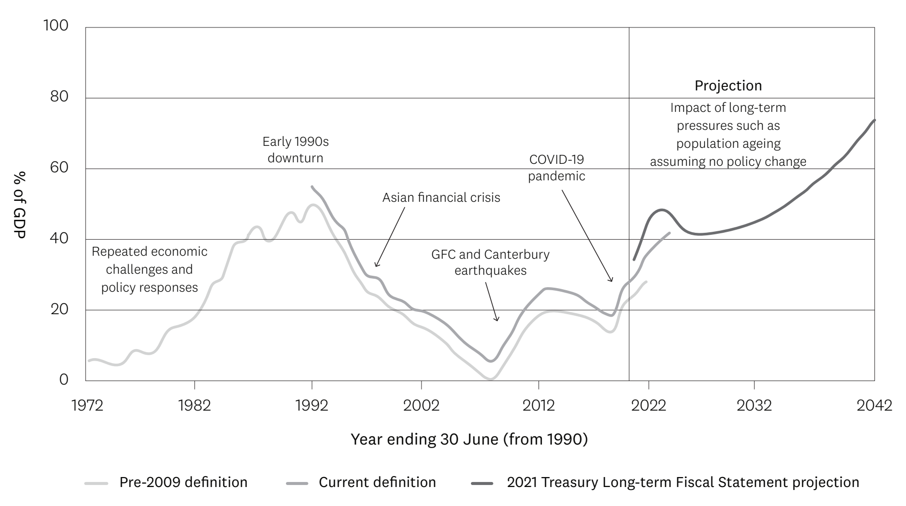
## Figure A1.4: Members of the COVID-19 Ministerial Group in March 2020 who remain in or have left Parliament as at June 2025

Adapted from DPMC, 2020; New Zealand Parliament, 2025; OAG, 2022

| Political party | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | National | Labour | NZ First | Green | Independent | ACT |
| Still in Parliament 25% [3 out of 12] | | Chris Hipkins<br>Damien O'Connor<br>Carmel Sepuloni | | | | |
| No longer in Parliament 75% [9 out of 12] | | Jacinda Ardern<br>Nanaia Mahuta<br>Stuart Nash<br>Grant Robertson<br>Andrew Little<br>David Parker<br>Kris Faafoi<br>Kelvin Davis | | James Shaw | | |

## Figure A1.5: Net core Crown debt

Source: Treasury, *2025 Long-term Insights Briefing*, Table ES.1



## Figure A1.6: Identifiable estimates of cost of shocks in New Zealand, 1987–2023

Source: Treasury, 2025

**Table 2.1: Identifiable estimates[14] of cost of shocks in New Zealand 1987-2023**

| Event | Cost of identifiable direct fiscal response (% of starting year's GDP) | Key fiscal costs | Selected wider non-fiscal costs (to the private sector or total economy) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **North Island weather events (2023)** | 1.7% | Estimated $6.65 billion allocated to fund operating and capital expenditure including Natural Hazards Commission costs and Crown reimbursement of local authority response and recovery costs. | Estimated physical asset damage to the total economy of ($9-14.5 billion), equal to around 3% of GDP. |
| **COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022)** | 20.4% | Estimated $66 billion of fiscal costs over the 2020-2026 fiscal years. | No comprehensive study yet available for New Zealand. |
| ***Mycoplasma bovis* (2017-2024)** | 0.3% | $0.7 billion costs to government, predominantly eradication costs and compensation payments. | $0.2 billion eradication costs to industry. |
| **Kaikōura earthquake** | 0.9% | $2-3 billion total costs to the Crown including Earthquake Commission (EQC) costs. | Gross costs to private insurers estimated at $2.3 billion. |
| **2013 drought** | *Not available* | - | Drought lowered 2013 GDP by 0.6%. |
| **Canterbury earthquakes (2010-11)** | 11.3% | EQC costs gross of reinsurance ($12 billion), other costs to the government ($11 billion). | Gross costs to private insurers estimated at $22.9 billion. |
| **Finance company failures (2006-11)** | 0.4% | $0.6 billion retail deposit scheme payouts, net of expected receivership proceeds and fees. | Estimated $3.0 billion gross losses for deposit holders. |
| **2008 drought** | *Not available* | - | Drought lowered annual GDP by 0.5%. |
| **1998 drought** | *Not available* | - | Drought lowered annual GDP by 0.9%. |
| **1992 drought** | *Not available* | - | Drought contributed to 1991-92 downturn. |
| **BNZ bank failure (1989-91)** | 1.0% | Gross cost of recapitalising BNZ. | |
| **Edgecumbe earthquake (1987)** | 0.2% | Approximately $120 million EQC payouts. | Total losses estimated at $430 million. |
| **Total losses from floods/storms aside from the North Island weather events (1987-2023)** | *Not available* | - | Estimated total economy property damage averaging 0.03% of GDP per year. |
| **Annual average 1987-2023** | **1.0%** | | |

[14] This table covers shocks with quantifiable fiscal and wider economic costs. It does not cover recessions, which are expected to be offset by periods of economic expansions.

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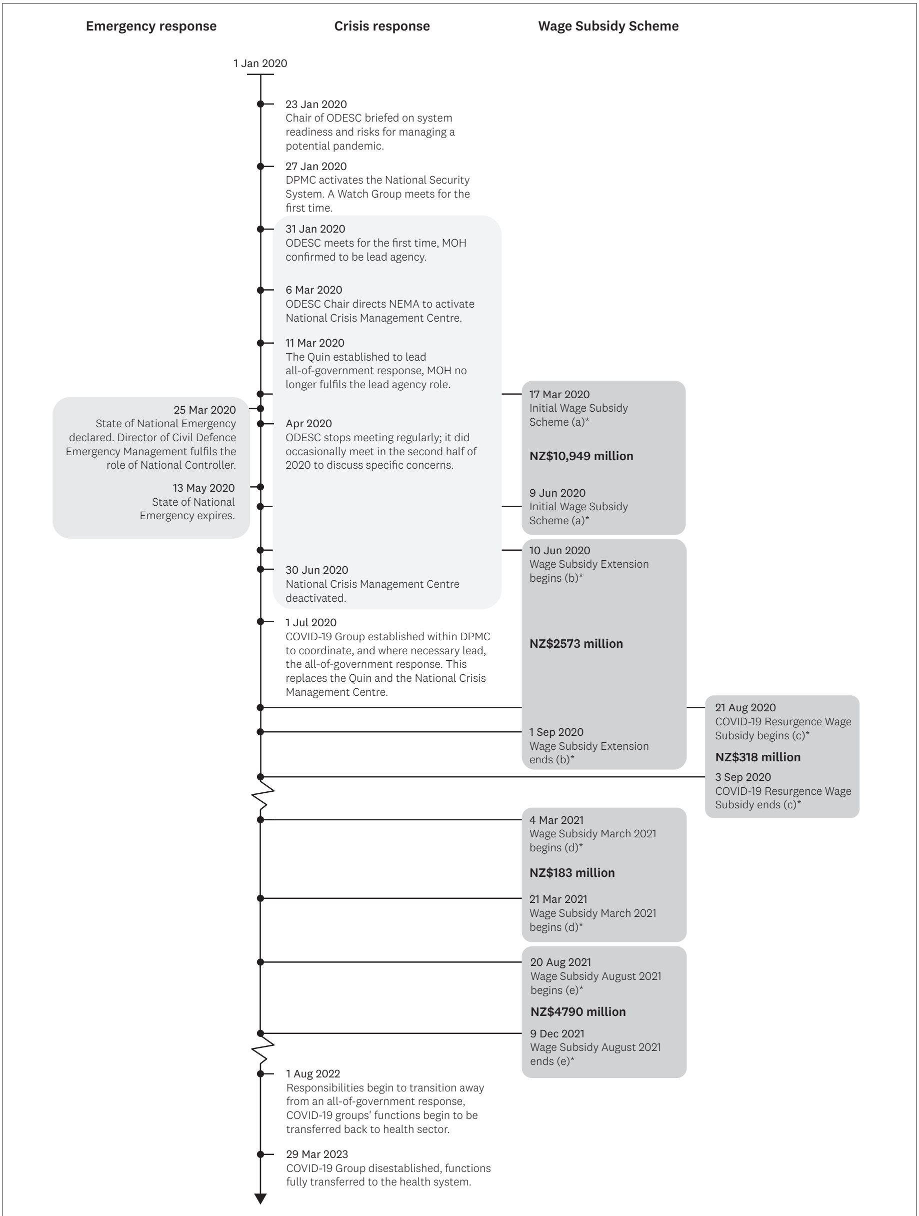
## Figure A1.7: Emergency and crisis responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: *COVID-19 Nation Dates*, September 2024, pp.38–39, 117, 119, 137, 157, 379




**Note to Figure 1:**

* The five stages of the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme are discussed on p.16 of *Discussion Paper 2025/03: Time to Prepare: Lessons from the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy*.

# Appendix 2: Tables

**Table A2.1: List of Cabinet material related to the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy with selected excerpts**

Source: McGuinness Institute, *Discussion Paper 2025/03: Time to Prepare: Lessons from the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy*, 2025

**Note to Table A2.1:**

* This booklet is published as a draft as we are waiting for responses to requests under the Official Information Act 1982. These requests are shown in this document with an asterisk.

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 6 Mar 2020 | | An Intervention Strategy for Economic Policy Responses to COVID-19<br>Authors: MBIE and Treasury | Paragraph 47: Employers impacted by COVID-19 could be supported with an Employer Subsidy to keep workers who have reduced hours, attached to their employers. Note that there is a risk of subsidies going to businesses who do not need them, and/or supporting businesses who are struggling for unrelated reasons. This could include funding to cover the wages of staff working reduced hours or funding for those who need training/ upskilling in and alternative area of work. This could start at a regional level and be scaled up to a national level if required. (p.13) | |
| Treasury | 9 Mar 2020 | 28 May 2020 | COVID-19: Oral Update and Economic Impacts<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-MIN-0090 | Paragraph 6: directed officials to develop further targeted firm support options for Cabinet decisions with priority on:<br>Paragraph 6.1: a targeted wage subsidy scheme for workers in the most adversely affected sectors (including possible financial support for leave requested by employees as a result of public health directions). (p.1) | See Question 4(a) of our OIA 2025/12 – request to find which officials were directed and whether a report was prepared.* |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | Early Mar 2020 | | COVID-19: Overview of the Government's response and Economic Response Package<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-SUB-0108 | Paragraph 4.2: A Business and Worker Support package to cushion the impact of the economic shock on firms and workers and support confidence in the near-term. This will include:<br>Paragraph 4.2.1: A temporary wage subsidy, which will be proposed in a separate Cabinet paper (p.1) | See Question 4(b) of our OIA 2025/12 – request to find date and copy of separate Cabinet paper.* |
| Treasury | 15 Mar 2020 | | COVID-19 financial support, Paper A: Business Continuity Package: Targeted wage subsidy scheme<br>Author: Cabinet (number to come) | Summary: Design of the wage subsidy scheme has evolved since lodgement of the Cabinet paper [COVID-19 financial support, Paper A: Business Continuity Package: Targeted wage subsidy scheme]. These design changes respond to recent developments and the likelihood that impacts will spread across all sectors of the economic [*sic*]<br>I propose a scheme still targeted at businesses impacted by COVID-19 and experiencing a significant downturn, but extending its coverage to all sectors of the economy.<br>Key design settings and their changes relative to the lodged version of the Cabinet paper are summarised below. Updated recommendations are included below. (p.1) | See Question 4(c) of our OIA 2025/12 – request to find Cabinet number and the previously lodged version of this Cabinet paper.* |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 16 Mar 2020 | | COVID-19: Overview of the Government's Response: Economic Package<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-MIN-108 Revised | Paragraph 22: agreed to implement a temporary COVID-19 wage subsidy scheme;<br>Paragraph 23: agreed that the purpose of the scheme is to help affected employees and businesses to adjust to the impact of COVID-19, not to support businesses for the duration of that impact;<br>Paragraph 24: noted that the COVID-19 wage subsidy will apply to all sectors nationwide;<br>Paragraph 25: agreed that the COVID-19 wage subsidy will be payable to the employer at a rate per employee of $585.80 per week for full time employees (similar paid to the maximum rate of paid parental leave) and $350 for part-time employees;<br>Paragraph 26: agreed that the COVID-19 wage subsidy will be for 12 weeks per employee;<br>...<br>Paragraph 27: agreed to a maximum payment of $150,000 per employer. (p.3) | |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 22 Mar 2020 (date to be confirmed) | | Expanding the COVID-19 wage subsidy scheme and adapting it to support furloughed workers<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-SUB-0134 | *Expanding the existing (active worker) COVID-19 wage support scheme*<br>Paragraph 4: We propose that we expand the coverage of the wage subsidy scheme by removing the cap to enable more support for workers in medium and large sized firms.<br>Paragraph 5: In the event of moving to an Alert Level 3 this would be even more important.<br>*Introduction of an enhanced (furloughed worker) COVID-19 wage subsidy scheme*<br>Paragraph 6: In the event of an Alert Level 4 there will still be some firms that will need to operate (i.e. essential services, employees working from home, or firms with appropriate social distancing protocols implemented). It is therefore important that firms continue to have the ability to receive support. (p.1) | See Question 4(d) of our OIA 2025/12 – request to find date.* |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 23 Mar 2020 | | Expanding the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme and Adapting it to Support Furloughed Workers<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-MIN-0134 | Paragraph 7: agreed to remove the cap on the COVID-19 wage subsidy scheme. (p.1) | |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 26 Mar 2020 (date to be confirmed) | | Cabinet paper - Transitioning to an enhanced wage subsidy scheme<br>Author: Cabinet (Cabinet number to come) | Paragraph 5: As of Thursday 26 March New Zealand is at COVID-19 Alert Level 4. There are still some firms that will need to operate (i.e. essential services including supermarkets, pharmacies, clinics etc. and employees able to work from home) all other employees would be asked to stay home (i.e. on prolonged leave) until the virus has been eliminated in New Zealand. It is therefore important that firms continue to have the ability to receive support to continue paying their workers.<br>Paragraph 6: There is a need to modify the existing wage subsidy scheme to enable firms that do need to shut down under Alert Level 4 meet wage costs for an extended period of time. This scheme would support employers and employees to maintain an employment connection and ensure a basic income for affected employees, even if the employee is unable to actually work any hours. (p.1) | See Question 4(e) of our OIA 2025/12 – request to find date, Cabinet number and the Cabinet Minute/s which sets out the proposed design changes and whether they were agreed or declined.* |
| MBIE | 1 May 2020 | | A Refreshed Industry Strategy in Response to COVID-19<br>Author: MBIE | Evidence pack: New Zealand Industries 1 May 2020: 'Despite the wage subsidy scheme, TIA [Tourism Industry Aotearoa] said 100,000 jobs (out of 400,000) in the tourism sector could still disappear. (p.65) | |

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MSD | 17 Jul 2020 | | Oral Item: Wage Subsidy Employer Survey<br>MSD (Understanding recipients views of the NZ Wage Subsidy Scheme)<br>CAB-20-MIN-0261 | | |
| Treasury | 14 Aug 2020 | 8 Dec 2020 | Additional Item: COVID-19 Resurgence: Possible Economic Response Package<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-MIN-0399 | Paragraph 1: agreed in principle that the Wage Subsidy Scheme be extended nationally to provide further wage subsidy support if the government decides to extend Level 3 restrictions in Auckland to a total of two weeks. (p.1) | |

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 17 Aug 2020 | 5 Nov 2020 | Creating a Resurgence Wage Subsidy Scheme and Amending the Leave Support Scheme<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-SUB-0402 | Paragraph 1: This paper seeks agreement to the criteria for a Resurgence Wage Subsidy Scheme in response to the increased Alert Levels put in place in August 2020. (p.1) | |
| Treasury | 17 Aug 2020 | 5 Nov 2020 | Creating a Resurgence Wage Subsidy Scheme and Amending the Leave Support Scheme<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-MIN-0402 | Paragraph 1: noted that on 14 August 2020, Cabinet agreed in principle that:<br>Paragraph 1.1: the Wage Subsidy Scheme be extended nationally to provide further wage subsidy support if the government decides to extend Level 3 restrictions in Auckland to a total of two weeks. (p.1) | |

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MBIE | | 3 Nov 2020 | COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme Changes<br>Author: MBIE | Paragraph 36: With applications now closed for the Wage Subsidies, the LSS [Leave Support Scheme] will become increasingly utilised (along with other supports) for businesses and their immunocompromised and vulnerable workers who are unable to work from home and cannot return to their place of work. (p.7) | |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 11 Dec 2020 | 4 Mar 2021 | Economic response to future resurgences of COVID-19<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-20-SUB-0531 | Paragraph 108: Beyond the changes proposed above, we have directed officials to report back to Ministers in February 2021 on whether other, more substantive changes could be made to the scheme, including:<br>Paragraph 108.1: introducing a higher-integrity model;<br>Paragraph 108.2: establishing a legal framework for the scheme;<br>Paragraph 108.3: introducing more payment tiers to reduce windfalls;<br>Paragraph 108.4: examining the potential benefits of moving scheme delivery to IR; and<br>Paragraph 108.5: the feasibility of a repayment rule, in a more enduring scheme, for employers who receive payments under the WSS, then subsequently both lay off stay and make a profit. (pp.16–17) | See Question 4(f) of our OIA 2025/12 – request for copy of the 'report back to Ministers in February 2021'.* |

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 14 Dec 2020 | | | | See Question 4(g) of our OIA 2025/12 –request to find date and Cabinet number. See reference to this decision in the 1 March 2021 Cabinet Minute titled Activating the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy March 2021 Scheme (below).* |

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 1 Mar 2021 | 28 May 2021 | Activating the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy March 2021 Scheme<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-SUB-0043 | Paragraph 4: On February 27, Cabinet agreed to a period of seven days at Alert Level 3 in Auckland from 6am on 28 February, fulfilling the activation criteria agreed to by Cabinet in December for future Wage Subsidy Schemes [CAB-20-MIN-0531 refers]. (p.1)<br>…<br>The Short-Term Absence Payment and the Leave Support Scheme are currently available at all Alert Levels. An employer cannot receive these and the WSSMAR21 [March 2021 Wage Subsidy Scheme] concurrently for the same employee. However, an employer can receive the WSSMAR21 and a Resurgence Support Payment at the same time. (p.4) | |
| Treasury | 1 Mar 2021 | 28 May 2021 | Activating the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy March 2021 Scheme<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0043 | Paragraph 4: agreed to activate a nationwide wage subsidy scheme, the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy March 2021 scheme (WSSMAR21), with the settings agreed to by Cabinet in December 2020. (p.1) | |

<table>
<tr><th>Publ-ished by</th><th>Date of paper (signed)</th><th>Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]]</th><th>Title</th><th>Selected excerpts</th><th>McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*</th></tr>
<tr><td>Treasury</td><td>30 Jun 2021</td><td></td><td><u>Oral Item: Wage Subsidy Activation Approach: Six Month Report</u><br>Author: DEV-21-MIN-0142</td><td>Paragraph 2: agreed to maintain the status quo activation approach for the Wage Subsidy Scheme. (p.1)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Treasury</td><td>18 Aug 2021</td><td>22 Dec 2021</td><td><u>COVID-19: Auckland Community Cases: Wage Subsidy Issues</u><br>Author: CVD-21-MIN-0004</td><td>Paragraph 39: noted the following indicative cost estimates for a single, two-week lump sum payment of the WSSAUG21:<table><tr><th>Scenario</th><th>WSSAUG21 cost (single, two-week lump sum)</th></tr><tr><td>National Alert Level 4 for 1 week or less</td><td>$1,000 million</td></tr><tr><td>National Alert Level 4 for 2 weeks</td><td>$2,000 million</td></tr></table>(p.4)</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 20 Aug 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Further Funding for Activating the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy and Resurgence Support Payment August 2021 Schemes<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-SUB-0328 | Potential future payments under WSSAUG21<br>…<br>Paragraph 16: This paper seeks authority to delegate funding decisions to the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Social Development and Employment, if the Alert Level decisions trigger a further payment of the WSSAUG21. The authority is to approve a maximum of $2.2 billion of funding from the CRRF, which is an upper estimate of the funding required to cover a further two weeks under current payment settings. (p.3) | |
| Treasury | 20 Aug 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Further Funding for Activating the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy and Resurgence Support Payment August 2021 Schemes<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0328 | Paragraph 29: authorised the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Social Development and Employment to agree appropriation changes for the Business Support Subsidy COVID-19 appropriation to cover future payments under the WSSAUG21, up to a maximum of $2.2 billion, to be charged against the CRRF. (p.5) | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 27 Aug 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Additional Item: COVID-19 Wage Subsidy August 2021 Scheme: Second Payment: Update<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0346 | | |
| Treasury | 9 Sep 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Replenishing the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-SUB-0368 | | |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 13 Sep 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Replenishing the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0368 | | |
| Treasury | 13 Sep 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Additional Item: Wage Subsidy Scheme: Update on Third Payment<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0373 | Paragraph 1: agreed that payment three of the August Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSSAUG21) will be triggered if Cabinet agrees that Alert Level 3 or 4 will remain in place anywhere in New Zealand at 11.59 pm on 17 September 2021. (p.1) | |
| Treasury | 27 Sep 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Wage Subsidy August 2021 Scheme: Six Week Review<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-SUB-0392 | Paragraph 21: Cabinet previously noted that MSD would initially absorb the costs of administering the WSSAUG21 within baseline, but that MSD may come back to Cabinet to seek additional funding [CAB-21-MIN-0328 refers]. (p.6) | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 27 Sep 2021 | 22 Dec 2021 | Wage Subsidy August 2021 Scheme: Six-week Review<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0392 | | |
| Treasury | 4 Nov 2021 | 23 Feb 2022 | Wage Subsidy August 2021 scheme: Second six-week review<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-SUB-0458 | | |
| Treasury | 8 Nov 2021 | 23 Feb 2022 | Wage Subsidy August 2021 scheme: Second six-week review<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-21-MIN-0458 | | |

| **Publ-ished by** | **Date of paper (signed)** | **Date pro-actively released (issue date)** [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | **Title** | **Selected excerpts** | **McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 29 Nov 2021 | | | | See Question 4(h) of our OIA 2025/12 – request to find Cabinet paper, date and Cabinet number.*<br>Note: We are aware that Cabinet agreed that the Wage Subsidy Scheme would stop when the COVID-19 Protection Framework (traffic light system) was implemented in any part of NZ but we cannot find the decision. See reference to this decision in the 18 February 2022 Cabinet Paper titled Economic Supports under Omicron (below). |

| Publ-ished by | Date of paper (signed) | Date pro-actively released (issue date) [[see OIA 2025/12, Question 4(i)*]] | Title | Selected excerpts | McGuinness Institute outstanding OIA 2025/12, Question 4* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treasury | 18 Feb 2022 | | Economic Supports under Omicron<br>Author: Cabinet CAB-22-SUB-0030 | Paragraph 22: As the Red setting of the CPF permits most businesses to operate with few restrictions, broad-based economic supports such as the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) are no longer appropriate. … There is a risk that further generalised business support like the wage subsidy could exacerbate inflationary pressure, create precedents that are unsustainable in the medium-to-long-term, and impede the transition to a more COVID-resilient economy. (p.4) | |

**Table A2.2: Changes in design aspects of the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme**

Source: McGuinness Institute, *Discussion Paper 2025/03: Time to Prepare: Lessons from the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy*, 2025

**Note to Table A2.2:**

* This booklet is published as a draft as we are waiting for responses to requests under the Official Information Act 1982. These requests are shown in this document with an asterisk.

| Design | Initial Scheme pre-17 Mar 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4b)*]] | Scheme as at 17 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 23 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 26 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Aug 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Dec 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4g)*]] | Scheme as at 18 Aug 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sectors** | Includes forestry and tourism sectors (accommodation, hospitality, and other tourism services) and other firms directly connected in the supply chain that are also suffering a decline. | Includes all sectors. | Includes registered charities, incorporated societies, non-government organisations, post-settlement governance entities, new businesses (less than a year old), high growth firms, and self-employed people. | Includes all businesses, self-employed people and sole traders, and registered charities and incorporated societies that are adversely affected by COVID-19, non-government organisations, and post-settlement governance entities. Excludes public sector organisations. | No change. | No change. | No change. |

| Design | Initial Scheme pre-17 Mar 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4b)*]] | Scheme as at 17 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 23 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 26 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Aug 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Dec 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4g)*]] | Scheme as at 18 Aug 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Regions** | All regions included. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. |
| **Disruptions to business required for eligibility** | 30% decline in actual revenue compared to the year before. | 30% decline in revenue compared to the year before, or can be expected to decline 30% within duration of scheme. | No change. | Employers no longer have to have experienced a 30% decline in revenue to qualify. | No change. | Employers need to experience or predict at least 40% decline in weekly revenue relative to an appropriate comparator period. | No change. |
| **Scale of subsidy (per full-time worker)** | $585.80 per week for full-time or $350 for part-time. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | $600.00 per week for full-time or $359.00 for part-time. |

| Design | Initial Scheme pre-17 Mar 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4b)*]] | Scheme as at 17 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 23 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 26 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Aug 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Dec 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4g)*]] | Scheme as at 18 Aug 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Duration of support** | 12 weeks. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | Linked with the escalation to Alert Level 3 or above, anywhere in New Zealand, for a period of seven or more consecutive days. | Two-week lump sum payments, with a report on the availability and settings every six weeks should the scheme remain open. |
| **Max subsidy per business** | Cap of $150,000. | No change. | Cap removed. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. |

| Design | Initial Scheme pre-17 Mar 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4b)*]] | Scheme as at 17 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 23 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 26 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Aug 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Dec 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4g)*]] | Scheme as at 18 Aug 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Maintenance of income** | Qualifying employees to be paid at least 60% of their previous income. | Decision to be made by Cabinet. Qualifying employees to be paid at least either:<br>60% of their previous income, or 80% of their previous income for the duration of the scheme. | No change. | Employers must continue to pay the staff named in their application at least 80% of their normal income, if this is possible.<br>If this is not possible, employers are required to pass on the full subsidy to each named employee. | No change. | Employers must endeavour to pay at least 80% of those employees' ordinary salary or wages, or, at a minimum, to pay at least the value of the subsidy to those staff (or their normal wage if less). | No change. |

| Design | Initial Scheme pre-17 Mar 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4b)*]] | Scheme as at 17 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 23 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 26 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Aug 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Dec 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4g)*]] | Scheme as at 18 Aug 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Other pre-qualifi-cations** | The business must have taken active steps to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 (e.g. engaged with their bank) and sign a declaration form to that effect. | No change. | No change. | The requirement to have taken measures to manage the implications of COVID-19 for their business now specifically mentions including drawing on internal cash reserves as appropriate. | No change. | No change. | No change. |
| **Admin-istering agency** | MSD, with support from IR. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. | No change. |

| Design | Initial Scheme pre-17 Mar 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4b)*]] | Scheme as at 17 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 23 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 26 Mar 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Aug 2020 | Scheme as at 14 Dec 2020 [[See OIA 2025/12 (4g)*]] | Scheme as at 18 Aug 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fiscal cost (gross), central estimate** | $750 million. | $5,100 million. | No change. | $8–12 billion. The highest theoretical impact is $15 billion. | No change. | $960 million for two weeks. | $1000 for National Alert Level 4 for 1 week or less, $2000 for National Alert Level 4 for two weeks (as single lump sum payment for two weeks). |

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