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Prime Minister Christopher Luxon says Hipkins is trying to ‘gaslight’ NZ on Covid-19 inquiry no-show



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Multimedia Journalist · NZ Herald · 18 Aug, 2025 08:28 AM 3 mins to read

Christopher Luxon has claimed Labour leader Chris Hipkins is trying to “politically gaslight” New Zealanders by not appearing at the Covid-19 Inquiry.

The Prime Minister faced questions on Newstalk ZB this morning after an eventful week in which he registered one of his worst polls as Prime Minister.

It also comes as the previous government ministers refused to give evidence in a public session as part of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the ministers have already given information privately.

Luxon told Newstalk ZB’s Mike Hosking that he would appear at the Covid-19 inquiry if he was called.

“I think New Zealanders have gone through a huge amount of suffering. Those former ministers [and] Prime Ministers should show up at that inquiry.

“I get what they’re trying to do. If you’re Hipkins, you’re trying to politically gaslight the country and say you had nothing to do with that record.”

Hosking asked Luxon whether he agreed with former Minister of Finance Grant Robertson, who called the inquiry “a show trial”.

“I disagree. I think it’s something called accountability, and I think showing up and actually giving the justification for why you took the actions you did that ultimately, I think, made the cost of living worse.”

A minute from the commission last week confirmed Dame Jacinda Ardern, Chris Hipkins, Grant Robertson and Dr Ayesha Verrall had refused to front up publicly.

“Politically, if you’re Chris Hipkins, you want to get out from under the rock, which is your last record when you were in government, where the economy got worse, law and order got worse, health and education got worse.

“Hipkins and Verrall are making a case they want to lead the country again, and I think it’ll be a disaster, but I think they should at least show up, and actually front.”

Hosking also asked Luxon about Auckland Mayor Wayne Brown’s “bed tax” idea.

Brown recently said introducing a bed night levy would deliver immediate stimulus by boosting tourism and attracting major events to Auckland.

“There’s no reason the Government couldn’t make a bed night levy an urgent priority and have it in place by next year,” Brown said. “The sector supports it and so do most Aucklanders.”

Luxon said a bed tax is “an interesting idea”, but wouldn’t be considered for the near future.

“I’m more worried about just adding a new tax. Now is not the time for a tax, we have to get the show growing and growth is really where we’ve got to focus on.

“It’s not something we’re going to look at this term, it’s not something we’re considering at all.”

Auckland Business Chamber chief executive Simon Bridges urged the Government to take stronger action to stimulate the economy in the Super City and beyond, amid rising unemployment.

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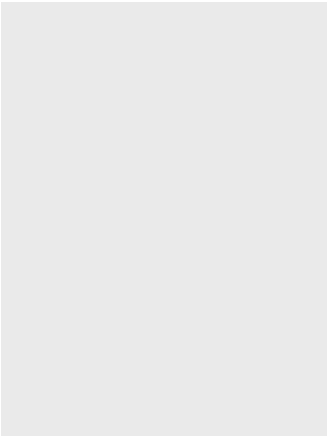
According to the latest Stats NZ data released last week, Auckland's 6.1% unemployment rate for the June 2025 quarter was the highest of any region and above the national rate of 5.2%, which has climbed to a near five-year high.

"It's pretty grim... it's very, very tough in Auckland," said Bridges, who is also a former National Party leader.

The bleak state of Auckland's economy was underscored by a *Herald* story this month showing a 6.6% drop in card spending in the central city between April and May 2024 and the same period in 2025. The picture was even starker on Karangahape Rd, where spending plunged by 22.5%.

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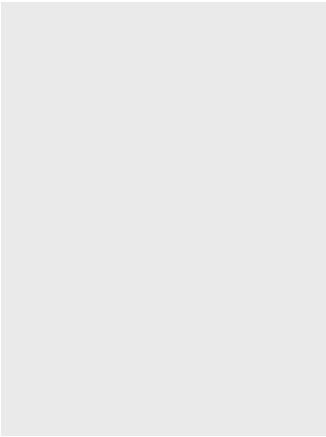
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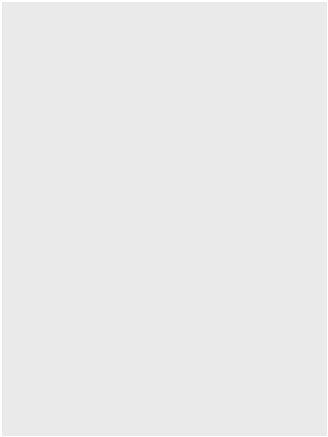
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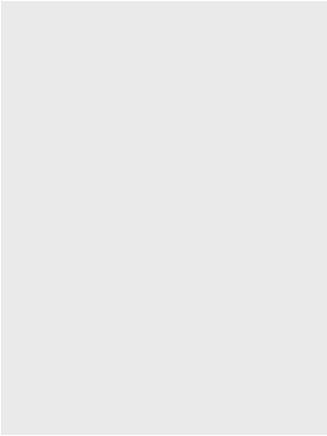
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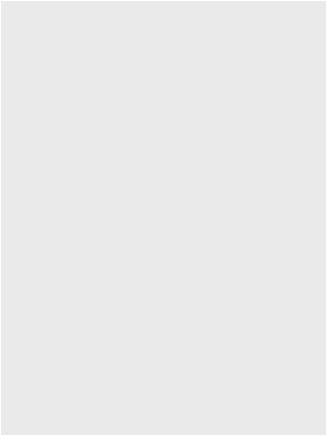
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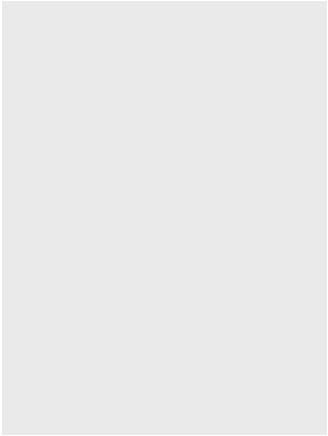
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