

Anti-vaccine group Voices For Freedom's book criticised for misleading Covid claims



Michael Morrah

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Anti-vaccine group Voices For Freedom's new book, which it claims "shatters the official Covid-19 narrative", will be of little value to most New Zealanders, according to two leading public health experts.

The People's Position, which is selling for \$47 a copy, is marketed on social media as "explosive". Voices For Freedom (VFF) co-founder Claire Deeks told the *Herald* more than 4000 copies of the book had been sold since hard copies were made available last month.

VFF supporters participated in the fiery anti-mandate occupation of parliament grounds in 2022 and the 271-page self-published book critiques the Government's response to the [Covid-19 pandemic](#).

Subtitled *Covid-19 Lessons Learned Phase Two Special Report: New Zealand Royal Commission of Inquiry*, it is sold online with the tag line "Hold this treasure-trove of incriminating evidence in your hot little hands".

The book features photos and descriptions of 22 supporters of the VFF movement under the Latin heading "dramatis personae", including Nelson-based lawyer Sue Grey who was recently [fined for breaching a suppression order](#).

A marketing lecturer told the *Herald* the design strongly evokes the look and feel of Government documents, risks misleading readers into assuming it's endorsed by the Government, and poses reputational risk for the legitimate Royal Commission.

However Deeks said the book was necessary because commissioners overseeing the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Covid-19 response were relying on government agencies and "favoured experts".

VFF was allowed to make submissions as part of public hearings on vaccine safety last month.

"If the public is to engage meaningfully, they need access to a clear, evidence-based counterpoint while the hearings are live, not months later," Deeks told the *Herald*.

The book claims foreign DNA found in Pfizer and Moderna vaccine vials could cause cancer and "genomic instability", suggests deaths increased as a result of the booster vaccine rollout, and that there's no robust scientific evidence for the widespread use of face masks.

Many of the topic-based sections are written or co-authored by New South Wales lawyer Katie Ashby-Koppens.

Ashby-Koppens has been helping represent the views of VFF founders Alia Bland and Deeks during hearings at the Government's [Royal Commission](#). She has no medical qualifications.

Otago University epidemiologist professor Michael Baker told the *Herald* he was "mystified" as to the purpose of the book.

He said the most productive channel for making valid arguments about the country's Covid-19 response was at the Government's official Royal Commission, where submitters, including members of the VFF, were asked to justify their views.

Baker said there was also another way to gain scientific credibility.

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"If you think the science is wrong, the most effective channel is to write something and get it published in a journal. Then it goes through a peer-review process. Unless it goes through some scrutiny, it doesn't have much standing," he said.

There was "no evidence" to support increased mortality being linked to the vaccine rollout, he said.

Baker's colleague and professor of public health at Otago University Nick Wilson didn't think the publication was worth spending money on.

"From a public health perspective, if they're not using well-informed people, it [the book] has very little value.

"There has been a range of evidence on masks that show that they work."

He said New Zealand's Covid-19 response "was not perfect" but it worked - a conclusion supported by the first phase of the Royal Commission, which finished last year.

"We have some very thorough documents from the first Covid inquiry. That is the official source of information," he said.

Commissioners in the first phase the inquiry [concluded](#) the vaccine mandates were "reasonable" for specific professions in 2021 and said lockdowns were an effective tool for managing virus elimination.

VFF's book uses the colour navy blue throughout and states on the front cover that it's a "special report" on the New Zealand Royal Commission of Inquiry.

Auckland University senior marketing lecturer Dr Herbert Sima told the *Herald* the design of the book was problematic.

"There is a credible likelihood that this publication could be mistaken for an official government report," he told the *Herald*.

He said those unfamiliar with VFF or its contributors, or those who skim read the document without reading the fine print could be misled.

"The design employs multiple visual and textual strategies that can strongly evoke the look and feel of an official government document."

He said this included the navy blue colour palette and bold sans-serif fonts.

He said that raised ethical concerns from a marketing perspective.

"It risks misleading readers into assuming government endorsement. It leverages public trust in official inquiries to amplify the advocacy group's viewpoint," he said.

He said it also posed reputational risks for the Royal Commission.

Deeks said navy blue is a longstanding brand colour of VFF and the movement's logo is displayed on the book's cover.

"The Government does not have dibs on a colour palette," she said.

In response to Baker, Deeks claimed the book did contain legitimate scientific perspectives.

"It is grounded in peer-reviewed science, official data, and testimony from internationally recognised experts, many of whom advised governments before 2020," she said.

Michael Morrah is a senior investigative reporter/team leader at the Herald. He won News Journalist of the Year at the 2025 Voyager Media Awards and has twice been named reporter of the year at the NZ Television Awards. He has been a broadcast journalist for 20 years and joined the Herald's video team in July 2024.

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