

Whitiki Aotearoa: further lessons from COVID-19 to prepare Aotearoa New Zealand for a future pandemic

Whitiki Aotearoa: Ngā akoranga atu anō mai
i te KOWHEORI-19 hei whakarite i Aotearoa
mō tētahi mate urutā ā muri ake

- 1376 No human endeavour is perfect, and there are always lessons to be learned. With the benefit of hindsight, pandemic legislation could provide clearer powers, more flexibility and stronger safeguards for fundamental rights and freedoms. Greater investment in data and modelling infrastructure would allow for more granular analysis of key decisions and their impacts and enable better-targeted mitigations. A stronger strategic function in the centre of government, and independent mechanisms to review settings, would help future governments prepare for and change their response strategy. A strong economy and fiscal buffers will give future decision-makers the resources they need to fight the next pandemic. Trust and social cohesion are assets that underpin effective pandemic responses and should be maintained and nourished in the meantime.
- 1377 These lessons do not detract from the overall success of the pandemic response. Indeed, our findings, lessons and recommendations are offered in the hope that they will assist decision-makers to be as successful in fighting a pandemic in the future. In keeping with the focus of this phase, they aim to provide clearer guardrails and stronger institutions to support good decisions, and to preserve the foundations and conditions needed for *effective* decisions.
- 1378 The temptation after a traumatic emergency like a pandemic is to look ahead and put the experience behind us. But we urge current and future governments, and current and future citizens, not to shy away from the task of preparation. Most of what will be needed in a future pandemic needs to be developed beforehand; it is more likely to be successfully introduced if it is done in settled, normal times rather than in a rush when crisis strikes.
- 1379 But perhaps more importantly, most of what really matters to good decisions in a pandemic – clearly identifying the problem, developing suitable options, using evidence to test and weigh the options, and mitigating undesirable effects – also matters in normal times. Investing in raising and maintaining the quality of decision-making processes and institutions in ‘peacetime’ will pay dividends in emergencies.
- 1380 We do not envy decision-makers facing a future pandemic. But the experience of COVID-19 has demonstrated that New Zealand can rise to the challenge. We hope that the lessons and tools we offer here are of assistance to decision-makers as they confront future challenges.