

COVID-19 Inquiry receives more than 31,000 submissions

Phase Two of Te Tira Ārai Urutā – the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned has received more than 31,000 submissions from community groups, businesses, organisations and the wider public.

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“My fellow Commissioners and I sincerely thank everyone who shared their COVID-19 experience with the Inquiry. We are grateful to those who took the time to make a submission, especially on topics that still bring difficult memories for many people,” says Grant Illingworth KC, Chair of the COVID-19 Inquiry.

Phase Two of the COVID-19 Inquiry began on 29 November 2025. The public submissions portal closed on Sunday 27 April 2025.

The COVID-19 Inquiry received submissions from every region in Aotearoa New Zealand, from Te Tai Tokerau Northland to Murihiku Southland. The region with the highest number of submissions was Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, with just under 7,500 submissions. The Inquiry also saw large numbers of submissions coming from Te Tai Tokerau Northland and Whakatū Nelson.

“It’s clear that the pandemic is still top of mind for many people in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly those areas like Auckland and Northland that were affected by longer lockdowns during the COVID-19 response,” says Mr Illingworth.

The Inquiry also heard from a range of ethnic groups and communities (NZ European, Māori, Pasifika, Asian communities, and those from the Middle East and Latin America), as well as a range of age groups (from under 18 to over 85). Nearly 25% of submissions came from those aged 55-64. The Inquiry heard from a wide range of people, with the majority of submissions coming from women (almost 60%).

Phase Two of the COVID-19 Inquiry is tasked with looking at the key decisions made by the New Zealand Government during 2021 and 2022 on vaccine mandates, safety, and approvals, the use of lockdowns, and testing, tracing, and non-pharmaceutical public health materials (like masks). Some of these topics, like vaccine safety, were not included in Phase One of the Inquiry, while others build on the work of Phase One – like lockdowns and mandates. The overall purpose of the COVID-19 Inquiry is to review Aotearoa New Zealand’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help prepare for future pandemics.

“We have heard from New Zealanders on all topics that are a focus for Phase Two,” says Mr Illingworth. “We are seeing that vaccine mandates and vaccine safety are a priority for most submitters, followed by the use of lockdowns.”

The sentiment of submissions ranges widely, from those who are critical of the New Zealand Government’s response as a whole, to those who are positive about the overall response, as well as many who hold mixed views about the response.

As well as considering the submissions received during Phase Two, the Inquiry will also be considering any non-confidential submissions from Phase One that cover topics being assessed in Phase Two, as well as information provided during the consultation on the Inquiry’s terms of reference in early 2024.

“The COVID-19 Inquiry is focused on addressing the questions the public wants answered about the pandemic, and making sure the concerns and experiences of everyone who experienced Aotearoa’s pandemic response are heard,” says Mr Illingworth.

The Inquiry will continue seeking evidence through meetings with key decision-makers and advisers, engagements with impacted communities, and public hearings to be held later in 2025.

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