

A series of pointed and illuminating questions

A submission to the C19 Lessons Learned  
Commission

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## **Question: Why did the govt not immediately follow the MOH advice given in late Feb/Early March of 2020 and close the borders?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt missed its chance to avoid C19 community cases entering NZ and we could have completely avoided the first lockdown if the govt had done so. The govt had a political conflict of interest that could explain this, especially since action was quickly taken after that conflict of interest disappeared.**

### **Summary:**

New Zealand's best defense against pandemics will always be its geographic isolation, a point that did not escape the notice of the MOH. It recommended that the govt immediately close the international border until it could find a way to effectively quarantine people travelling into New Zealand, and if the govt did so, it was unlikely to need any restrictions higher than Level 2 for a relatively short period of time. Unfortunately, the govt did not accept and act on that recommendation, and therefore squandered New Zealand's natural geographic advantage. Infuriatingly, it appears that the main reason that recommendation wasn't accepted because they thought that an international memorial service about the events that occurred on March 15th, 2019 would be greatly politically advantageous, and their polling at that time indicated that they needed every advantage that they could get. Even when unprecedented steps such as professional sports leagues being suspended overseas were occurring, the govt still insisted on keeping the borders open. Finally, the memorial service was cancelled the night before March 15th, 2020, and there was an almost immediate change in approach by the govt.

### **Related Questions:**

-What was govt polling saying about the importance of a prospective March 15th memorial service?

- Why didn't the govt close the borders after the first C19 case arrived in NZ?
- How confident was the govt in private when in public it was saying "We don't have an outbreak, NZ is perfectly safe." on March 3rd?
- As of March 3rd, did the govt believe that NZ would have to enter a lockdown if community cases started to emerge?
- As of March 3rd, did the govt believe that any C19 outbreak within NZ would need to be managed by the 'Level System'?
- Why were the local councils much more cautious about Covid consequences.
- Did the MOH continue following up with their recommendation as the risk overseas increased?
- Why didn't the govt close the borders once unprecedented cancellation of sporting events started occurring in the USA?
- Why didn't the govt close the border once the Piha surfing event and/or the pacific cancellations were made?
- Why did the govt still insist that the memorial service would go ahead with international guests on March 13th?
- What finally changed for the govt between March 13th and March 14th when they finally canceled the memorial service?
- How long had they been planning a general border closure before cancelling the memorial service?



## **Question: What Was the Criteria for a Disease that is Meant to be Controlled By the Level System?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The actions that the level system authorizes leads to massive costs and loss of freedoms. It is very important that this system not be used to justify general authoritarian actions by a govt which may be politically popular to a majority of the population.**

**Summary:**

The Level system uses spread as its general criteria for level selection, without any immediate reference to mortality. It seems to make the assumption that any disease controlled by the system is highly fatal or disabling to the general population, and therefore uncontrolled spread could lead to a civil emergency leading to a breakdown of law and order and possibly a collapsed state. It quickly became clear that Covid would not lead to a civil emergency of this kind, mortality being highly concentrated of people with QALY of 1 - 2 or below, or people with health conditions (some being self-inflicted) such as a BMI > 40, etc. And yet the Level System persisted until almost the end of 2021, only to be replaced by another "protection framework", albeit one that didn't call for the more devastating authoritarian actions in the level system.

**Related Questions:**

- Is there a QALY threshold criteria?
- Is probability of a civil emergency used as a criteria?
- Is probability of military collapse due to illness used as a criteria?
- Is probability of a breakdown of law and order used as a criteria?
- Are any of these thresholds legally binding?

## Question: **Was the Level System ever designed to be Proactive instead of Reactive?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Based on the criteria provided, the Level system was HEAVILY abused during the Covid response. This led to huge, unnecessary costs across NZ, unnecessary loss of freedom and the mental anguish that caused, and also led to a lack of predictability of future planning, for very questionable benefits.**

### **Summary:**

The level system appeared to give very understandable criteria for which “level” the NZ response should be using. That criteria was thrown completely out of the window by the govt during Covid. For example, New Zealand NEVER met the criteria for Level 4 (“Sustained and widespread unlinked transmission”) when Level 4 was imposed. This gave the govt almost unlimited power without having to show the Public Health justification.

### **Related Questions:**

- Had the panel who created the Level System ever thought there would be a risk of the govt disregarding the criteria?
- Had the panel intended that the determination of current conditions compared to the criteria and the execution of recommended actions by the level system be done by a cross-party committee containing both govt parties and also those parties in opposition, therefore removing partisan politics as a factor?
- Was there any thought of making the criteria legally binding and measured by an impartial arbitrator?
- Was there any thought of having the power provided by the level system solely wielded by the MOH?
- How did the creators of the Level System envision that a govt applying the guidelines would be held accountable if they abused the implementation?
- Was the MOH privately concerned about the abuse of the Level System and did they make their concerns known to the govt?

**Question: Was the Level System originally designed to use bubbles instead of strictly controlled numbers of people?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Bubbles did not appear in the original set of measures, they were very harmful to the mental health of people living alone and/or young children, and it is not apparent that that was a superior strategy as opposed to a “rule of 6/8/10”. They were not employed in most areas of Australia, and elimination still occurred.**

**Summary:**

Demanding that people stay in their own family sized bubbles instead of allowing meetings of 6, 8 or 10 people in a private location led to a very claustrophobic lockdown and the much mocked demand of not talking to your neighbour. This ended up not being a required component of an eliminating lockdown, there were several countries that ended up with no Covid in the community that never used bubbles.

**Related Questions:**

-If the Level system didn't originally have the intent of using bubbles, then when were they first added/proposed?

**Question: Why was the NZ govt still allowing tourists to enter NZ when it was starting to restrict the borders, knowing that said tourists were extremely unlikely to have the ability to self-isolate?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was a symptom of the govt being stuck between strategies, and this gave people returning to New Zealand a bad name when in fact it was almost logistically impossible for tourists to think about self-isolating.**

**Summary:**

Even after the govt had lost the ability to go ahead with the March 15th memorial service, it seems it was still highly confused with the route forward. It suddenly told incoming tourists they would need to self isolate and unsurprisingly, tourists who suddenly had this demand thrust upon them found it extremely difficult to do so. Stories about people failing to self-isolate during these early days then were repeated endlessly by surrogates to justify MIQ, even when the MOH was no longer recommending it in late 2021.

**Related Questions:**

- Had the govt come up with any credible processes for enforcing tourist self-isolation?
- Was there any kind of govt discussion paper that actually gave a concrete reason to continue to admit tourists after the borders were starting to close?

## **Question: Was the govt still planning to follow the existing Level system criteria on March 21st?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The criteria presented to the public in the press conference on March 21st suggested that were far away from meeting the criteria for Level 4 or any lockdown. Then the govt turned around 2 days later and completely broke all of the criteria.**

### **Summary:**

The criteria given for Level 4 was sustained and widespread community transmission, while the criteria for Level 3 was for significant community transmission. There was no evidence for any unlinked cases at that time, if we believed the criteria given to us at the time, there was no reason to believe that NZ was anywhere close to a lockdown. This meant that businesses and individuals got absolutely the wrong impression of the risk of a lockdown occurring in the near future. It was absolutely horrible communications from the govt and the first clear example of a broken promise.

### **Related Questions:**

-Were there any indications of Level 4 planning in any internal govt communications around this date, therefore making it clear that the narrative of a sudden "Captain's Call" was a lie?

**Question: Was the govt or the media considering 'The Hammer and the Dance' as legitimate or valid to inform the response to the pandemic?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It is very concerning if the media or especially the govt gave this alarmist, hysterical, apocalyptic and anti-science prediction/model any kind of credence.**

**Summary:**

Plastered across social media, 'The Hammer and the Dance' suggested that there would need to be widespread lockdowns followed by times when restrictions could be loosened for a few weeks and then lockdowns would have to return, due to the supposed uncontrollable spread of Covid. No previous pandemic, including the 1918 Spanish Flu, ever required these types of measures, and it quickly became clear from numerous locations that never locked down that Covid did not require these restrictions either. There was no deep analysis contained in said 'article' about what had actually happened in most locales in January and February 2020, just a quick chain of assumptions based on an inflated 'R' number. But the suggestion that this would be necessary threw much of the easily persuaded population into an apocalyptic frenzy. The author of said piece clearly had sinister motives, and continued to make apocalyptic screeds on other subjects.

**Related Questions:**

- Did any of the govt discussion papers reference 'The Hammer and the Dance'?
- Was it acknowledged in media and not immediately debunked by referencing previous pandemics with initial 'R' numbers?

## **Question: Did New Zealand even Meet the Criteria for ANY Kind of Lockdown on March 23rd? What criteria was Used for “Unlinked Cases”?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This first lockdown had a huge emotional and mental effect on New Zealanders. It is very important that those kind of authoritarian measures not be used based on the whim of frightened citizens and/or a government looking for political advantage, and only be used when there is a public health justification for such measures.**

### **Summary:**

Although there were an increasing number of cases in the community on March 23rd 2020, the vast vast majority of cases were those from returned travellers and their families, followed by some cases from a set of easily identified clusters. Suddenly the NZ public was told that there were 4 unlinked cases, however after the lockdown started, only a relative few unlinked cases were actually found, and surveillance testing failed to find ANY unlinked cases. Lockdowns were only useful for controlling unlinked cases/unknown paths of transmission because any cases that were already linked were already in isolation and posed no transmission risk to the New Zealand public. Was it possible that the govt abused the definition of unlinked cases to justify a lockdown that appeared would be politically advantageous?

### **Related Questions:**

- Were cases that could be linked to the border or workers at the airport considered an “unlinked case” for these purposes?
- How long did Contact Tracers work to establish a link before they actively reported that a case was “unlinked”?
- Did Labour’s polling indicate that a lockdown would be politically advantageous?
- Was there any consideration given to a limited local lockdown?
- Did media members know that said unlinked cases were likely to be airport workers or otherwise related to the border?

**Question: Why did the govt confidently state that it had the powers to execute a Level 4 lockdown when it did not? Did it know it didn't have the powers?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Level 4 restrictions were widespread and were incredibly damaging. It is extremely important that a government in a nominally free country not be able to execute these restrictions without legal backing. Also, it highly suggests that the MOH was never preparing for the use of Level 4, therefore not recommending it or believing that it would be necessary.**

**Summary:**

For 9 days, all the officials of the govt of New Zealand confidently stated that they had legal powers to force unprecedented authoritarian restrictions on the movement and activities of New Zealand citizens. They did not have the legal basis to enforce these restrictions for these 9 days. And no media outlet reported that the govt did not have these powers. It is unknown whether the govt knew that they didn't have these powers or not. The only thing needed to give the govt the legal basis to enforce these restrictions was an Epidemic Notification by the MOH. This highly suggests that the MOH was NEVER planning for the use of Level 4 restrictions, thinking they were unnecessary at that point and highly unlikely to ever be necessary.

**Related Questions:**

-Did any govt department do an audit of the required powers for the proposed lockdown and the legal justification to execute them?

-Were there any immediate legal challenges that the govt and/or media deliberately did not report on in order to make New Zealanders appear united in their consent for this lockdown?



**Question: Why did owners of The Warehouse and Dominoes Pizza confidently state that they would be exempt from the total shutdown that Level 4 required for at least 1 day after the announcement on March 23rd?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The arbitrary rules being created on the fly for Level 4 could have led to massive levels of corruption as the government could have chosen winners and losers. Was some kind of potential corruption being attempted?**

**Summary:**

On the night of Monday, March 23rd, and much of the day on Tuesday, March 24th, The Warehouse and Dominoes Pizza made numerous confident statements in social media and the general media that they would be allowed to stay open for business. It is suspicious that these statements were being made since they went completely against the description given for Level 4 restrictions, and caused great ire in fearful members of the public.

**Related Questions:**

-Was there some kind of arrangement being made in the back channels about allowing those businesses to stay open before the public outrage forced the PM to stomp on it?

**Question: What was the context of the NZ Military/Govt “succession plan” in case of key officials being incapacitated by Covid that was reported in the media?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This report being released by the media increased the public hysteria around Covid and was used as yet another justification for lockdown. It is important to understand the context that the report was created.**

**Summary:**

Around the time that the lockdown was announced, the print media released a report detailing the arrangements that the NZ govt and military had made about what would happen if key members became incapacitated as a result of Covid. As it is very clear now, it was always EXTREMELY unlikely that any key govt officials were going to be incapacitated by Covid because it didn't incapacitate or kill young healthy people in any significant number. It is important to understand if that report was a routine report that needed to be created for any eventuality and the military/govt considered it very unlikely that any of the succession measures would actually be needed, or the govt/military actually believed that there was a credible risk due to Covid, and where it got that idea if so.

The USA intelligence agencies were running a psyop about the effects of Covid in Iran in Feb-March 2020, suggesting that mass graves were needed in cities, that the police were being made ineffective due to mass illness, and suggesting that the state of Iran was near to collapse, obviously attempting to provoke an open rebellion against the govt by opposition members that believed it to be a good time to strike, We now know that all those claims were absolutely false. It would be useful to know if those claims were actually believed by the New Zealand military and used as a basis for this plan.

**Related Questions:**

-What was the best estimate of estimated military casualties from Covid among young men and women fit for combat when this report was written?

## **Question: Who were responsible for unnecessary Covid alarmist statements on “Learning at Home” TV?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**These statements could have been very harmful to the mental health of children and could lead them to have continuing anxiety today. It is important to know if these statements were encouraged by the govt, and if they weren't, to make sure that this unnecessary provoking of anxiety would not occur in the future.**

### **Summary:**

At the beginning of the day, the presenter of Learn At Home TV often made alarmist and long-ranging statements of questionable veracity. These statements include “You are probably going to be practicing social distancing for the rest of your life” and “You’re not going to be shaking hands for the rest of your life.” If these were ad-libbed statements, they were highly irresponsible and should have been stopped. If this was a narrative that was encouraged by the govt, then obviously this was much worse.

### **Related Questions:**

- Was there a script or list of narratives given to the presenters/recommended for broadcast by the govt?
- Were complaints received from the public about these alarmist statements?

**Question: Were govt officials allowed to pick and choose who was in their bubbles, and did they deliberately create minor indiscretions to appear like they were holding themselves accountable?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The Level 4 regulations were as unwieldy as they were unnecessary, meant for a mass casualty situation that was clearly not happening. As that became clear and the govt members stretched the rules to remain functional, it was incredibly damaging to New Zealand that they persisted with the rules instead of dropping down to a lower level when they were clearly unnecessary.**

**Summary:**

The bubble restrictions would have caused numerous logistical problems for the PM, so she solved them by picking and choosing who was in her “bubble”, a privilege that the rest of New Zealanders were not accorded. This would not have been a problem with a “rule of 6/8/10” allowed by other countries. Instead of moving to that, we started hearing of harmless but humiliating violations of the rules by govt officials. Was it possible that these violations were meant to divert the attention away from more fundamental violations done by govt officials and also stop New Zealanders from debating whether these restrictions were useful in the first place?

**Related Questions:**

- Was the Labour Party directing surrogates to label Simon Bridges commute as a violation of L4 even though it clearly wasn't, to put pressure on him to be less effective as an opposition?
- Was there any thought given about moving away from bubbles and back to a rule of limited numbers?
- Was L3 initially designed to have a bubble, making it much closer to L4 than originally suggested by the criteria and actions?

## **Question: Did the govt ever realize that Level 4 had been complete overkill?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Level 4 made the rest of the Covid response in New Zealand an exercise in hysteria. Many people were much more afraid of measures that might be used to control Covid than the actual effects of Covid. In the meantime, Australia managed to eliminate Covid in almost all of its provinces without such intense measures.**

### **Summary:**

It would be instructive to know when the government changed from using Level 4 out of absolutely “caught unprepared panic” to deciding that Level 4 was a useful political ploy and a possible backstop. It was instructive that even with the absolute lack of unlinked transmission, the govt was not criticized by the media for using unnecessary measures.

### **Related Questions:**

- What was the rationale for expanding “essential items” instead of just dropping the essential items label?
- When were the initial Level 4 commercials that suggested that an overwhelmed acute health system was working to handle many cases in hospital recorded? When were new commercials recorded once it became clear the number of cases in hospital would likely never go above single digits?

**Question: Why were the timings of different level reviews and changes so random? Was it a deliberate political ploy?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The unpredictability and arbitrariness and exceptions around the timing of level changes added to the psychological anguish of citizens and the challenges that businesses faced.**

**Summary:**

Even though Jacinda stated that Level changes would ALWAYS be reviewed and announced on the Monday of cabinet meetings and take effect on the following Wednesday, that rule was broken almost immediately. Often this was done to ensure that the public did not “take advantage” of an upcoming public holiday, but there were other situations that appeared extremely random. Was this a deliberate ploy to invoke learned helplessness?

**Related Questions:**

- Had there been internal communication that the Level 4 would be extended for 6 more days regardless of case metrics?
- What possible reason was given for delaying the movement from Level 2.5 (10 ppl) to Level 2 (100 ppl) from taking effect on Wednesday to taking effect on Friday, when case numbers were already in the low single digits at this point and there were 0 cases in most locales?

**Question: When did the govt fully change its justification away from civil emergency and towards “winning” the comparative Covid statistics compared to other nations?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was when the “mission creep” started and the sunk cost fallacies started coming out. With so much power given to the govt by the level system and the wide swath of destruction these measures caused, it is essential that the “mission” of the Level system be fixed and not allowed to creep.**

**Summary:**

After it was clear globally that Covid was not killing an indiscriminate selection of the population, but instead an extremely old and/or extremely unhealthy segment of the population, and therefore couldn't cause a collapse of the state and/or law and order, then there was a clear argument for discontinuing the use of the Level System, which would have caused much more predictability for non-open-border reliant businesses and the general public, and much less economic damage. It is very important to discover how this response moved from being about public health to being politically captured and influenced.

**Related Questions:**

-When did the MOH originally see the Level system being dropped from the Covid response and/or what criteria did they advise?

-How did the media do a straight-faced comparison between a geographically isolated New Zealand and western countries in the northern hemisphere who had Covid saturated in their communities with no warning?

## **Question: Did the govt actually believe there was hidden unlinked community transmission by early-mid May 2020?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**With contract tracing and mandatory isolation being endured by Covid position and close contacts, most of the restrictions in L2 had no basis if there was no hidden transmission**

**Summary:**

By mid-May, there had been no 'unlinked cases' (as dubious as that definition may have been) reported for at least 3 weeks. The pattern of cases in areas with hidden transmission had become quite obviously random and non-linear, vs the pattern of cases where there was no hidden community transmission. It is important to know if the govt actually believed there was hidden unlinked transmission still occurring or if this was a political ploy to reduce anxiety.

**Related Questions:**

- Was the govt contracting various scientists such as Baker and Wiles to play "Bad Cop" to the govt slowly loosening restrictions?
- How did the media take Wiles assertion that there was "definitely hidden community spread" seriously vs the data that clearly showed no unlinked spread?



**Question: Was the Govt deliberately not testing MIQ returnees so they could claim zero active Covid cases in New Zealand and therefore complete elimination?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Numerous close calls caused by failed MIQ logistics and lack of testing could have put all of the hard work done by New Zealand Citizens at risk.**

**Summary:**

There was a relatively long period of time when MIQ wasn't reporting any cases whatsoever. Based on the patterns of cases seen later when more regular testing was initiated, it is clear that was extremely unlikely and in fact cases were simply not being recorded.

**Related Questions:**

-Did internal govt documents/discussions suggest that the NZ Public would only support going to Level 1 if there were no active cases within NZ?

**Question: Why did the media allow Labour to get away with their attitude that the ends (eventual elimination) justified the means (much much more severe restrictions than almost anywhere else)?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**There were numerous isolated countries that managed to eliminate the first generation of Covid with much looser restrictions and time, especially including all provinces of Australia except for Victoria. Labour was allowed to overestimate its performance and avoid negative criticism about what brought on the extremely severe restrictions and measures, and that led to much poorer outcomes as the response dragged on.**

**Summary:**

Labour was allowed by the media to strut around as if they had accomplished something unique (when it hadn't) by comparing New Zealand to the large western countries in the Northern Hemisphere who had Covid saturated in the community almost from the start, as compared to much more relevant countries. Jacinda told its members that "we can deny" negative criticism due to the eventual positive outcome. This was an extremely dangerous attitude for a govt that had unfettered access to damaging restrictions to have, and it was made much worse with the election outcome. The media did not serve its purpose, which would have been an unvarnished retrospective about what led to the severe restrictions, whether they had actually been necessary, and a comparison to more relevant countries such as Australia and isolated Asian islands. When opposition parties attempted to do so, the media did not give them any traction and gave their criticism a negative tone. This also greatly increased partisanship in the future aspects of the Covid response.

**Related Questions:**

-Why did the media not criticize Labour for not following MOH recommendations the first place?

-Did the media ever cover those logistical complaints from opposition parties and/or private members of the public?

**Question: Did the govt understand the great amount of sole responsibility it had for MIQ, and did it ever worry that there was hidden community spread due to the numerous MIQ containment failures?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**After the great sacrifices the New Zealand public had made to eliminate Covid in the community, and the ongoing border restrictions, the govt appeared very lackadaisical about security and containment within MIQ, leading to several “close calls”. ‘Scientists’ also appeared to have an inconsistent attitude towards risk of community transmission from breaches vs earlier in the response.**

**Summary:**

In the early months of MIQ, there were numerous breaches in allowing untested people to depart the facility when their isolation period had ended, incoming travelers being allowed to attend funerals, and also numerous physical security breaches. One of the early obvious effects of the govt masking in the elimination afterglow was a lack of rigour with dealing with MIQ and border processes, even though errors in those processes could have easily led to another lockdown being necessary. That was very inconsistent with the stringency of measures employed during Level 4, and suggests a severe lack of perspective of the risks (which would become a theme).

It was very interesting that ‘scientists’ brought forward by the govt and their surrogates in traditional media and social media seemed rather unconcerned about the possibility of hidden community spread from these events whereas only a few months or even weeks earlier, they spoke of a continued or almost assured risk of hidden community spread from the initial outbreak even with very very few cases being found at that point. They could not honestly have held both positions, so there was clear dishonesty exposed at either one time or the other.

**Related Questions:**

-Were there any internal queries by the MOH about providing increased surveillance testing or suggestions that they were actually worried about hidden spread?

**Question: Did the govt actually have advanced notice/warning of the three Auckland community outbreaks that it didn't share with the public or other parties?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt started talking seriously about precautions and had a suspicious mood change a few days up to a week before each of the outbreaks. That lack of transparency if they indeed had some advanced warning was unacceptable for an actual Public Health response.**

**Summary:**

Every time before a Covid Community outbreak happened in Auckland, there would be a sudden press conference that seemingly occurred out of the blue that would talk about new precautions or how the govt would respond to a new outbreak. The most marked example was a week before the Delta outbreak where the govt announced that masks would be part of any new elevated alert system period. If this was due to 'trip-wires' or word-of-mouth giving advanced warning, said warning was not passed on to members of the public who would have been exposed to Covid right before the lockdown occurred. If this was a political ploy to make the govt seem competent and prepared right before a new outbreak, it was a cynical political ploy indeed.

**Related Questions:**

-Was there any sudden special communications between the MOH and the govt or the contract tracers or govt, or DHB members and the govt a few days before the August 2020, February 2021 and/or August 2021 Auckland outbreaks?

**Question: Were the circumstances of the initial case of the August Auckland Outbreak similar to cases that were labeled as “unlinked transmission” in the initial outbreak?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt appeared to treat people who specifically worked at border protection differently than people who worked at the airport. That was a questionable distinction that indicated that earlier “unlinked transmission” cases may well have been mislabeled, and demonstrated an error in risk assessment, making outbreaks more likely.**

**Summary:**

The people involved in this outbreak worked in a coolstore that got supplies directly from Auckland airport. Yet a specific message to the media said that “There was no connection to a high-risk person, such as someone who works at the border.” Obviously, the govts risk assessment was incorrect to consider those workers low risk as this and another outbreak would be caused by workers that were related to the border or the airport in that sense, and it suggests the wrong criteria had always been used for whether a case was border related or unlinked transmission.

**Related Questions:**

-What was the exact criteria of the MOH or contract tracers used to determine if a case was “border related”?

## **Question: Did the govt really think there was ANY risk of community transmission in the rest of New Zealand from the August Auckland Outbreak?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Setting a precedent that Level 1 would disappear if there was a Covid community case anywhere in New Zealand greatly increased unpredictability, increased the low-level sense of hysteria, and was yet another abuse of the Level system.**

**Summary:**

Christchurch and the rest of New Zealand were suddenly kicked into Level 2 restrictions, despite there not being any cases detected outside of Auckland, and in fact, there would be no cases in the South Island from any of the Auckland outbreaks until close to the end of 2021. This was a clear violation of criteria of the level system, and this would have widespread and ongoing consequences around business and event planning.

**Related Questions:**

-Were any tradeoffs about the level of risk of any transmission vs predictability of changes in Level settings for businesses ever discussed, or any acknowledgement about how this greatly increased unpredictability for businesses given?

**Question: Did the govt understand and was aware that the “Don’t Stop Summer” advertising campaign was a cynical lie? If so, was there any concern about that?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The “Don’t Stop Summer” campaign was the first of many advertising campaigns that suggested that the New Zealand public was responsible and was capable of keeping us in Level 1 restrictions. It increased hysteria and pressure on individuals to report and act on any minimal symptoms. It was a cynical lie that reduced trust because only the govt failing at MIQ processes and then continuing to employ a hair-trigger elimination strategy could have caused an elevation out of Level 1.**

**Summary:**

Starting around December 2020, the NZ govt ran numerous commercials showing normal NZ summer activities being paused in time due to someone not following recommended hygiene practices, or not contact tracing scanning, or not isolating even with minimal symptoms. These well produced and popular commercials hid a darker meaning and an even more cynical lie. In truth, none of the conscientious measures being requested/coerced on members of the general public would have made a difference. If a Covid infection was detected among a member of the general public that was not immediately connected to the border, then none of those measures would have stopped the govt from imposing a lockdown and therefore “stopping summer”. Furthermore, the member of the public would have not been responsible for becoming infected in the first place, that would have not been possible without a govt failure at the border in terms of MIQ or border workers, and the govt was not close to employing all of the measures (such as RATs, which became available in other nations in December 2020) that could have stopped cases being spread from MIQ/the border.

The message given by the advertisement was therefore false, and cynically so. It was made false because of the deliberate hair-trigger elimination strategy employed by the govt. If the govt had adopted a more measured containment and suppression strategy which continually led to elimination, such as those



employed by Queensland and New South Wales, where the govt would wait a few days to understand the extent of spread among the public before acting, then those conscientious measures may well have saved the community from greater restrictions. But the govt refused to change its strategy even after seeing successes overseas, and therefore these series of adverts were a cynical strategy of reducing “the damage” to the govt, and also subliminally shifting the blame to members of the public who were actually infected with Covid.

**Related Questions:**

- Was the MOH concerned about this messaging since it contradicted the “People are the solution, not the problem” mindset?
- Given that this was the first of at least 4 advertising campaigns that had an outright false narrative or made false promises (the others being “Level 1 takes everyone”, “Two shots for summer” and “Masks matter”), why didn’t the media notice that this was a pattern and give these campaigns greater scrutiny?
- Did the government not fully appreciate that their aggressive lockdown to eliminate strategy and MIQ management made them SOLELY responsible for cases emerging in the community?

**Question: Were deliberate attempts made by the govt to delay and slow down the ability of NZ Citizens to travel to Australia and other destinations overseas in order to bolster domestic travel instead?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The ability for law-abiding NZ citizens to travel overseas is a basic civil right, and it would be an abuse of govt power to deny or delay any possible return to normality simply for the govt's political and economic benefit.**

**Summary:**

The Trans-Tasman travel bubble was delayed several times and always away from desirable dates for travel. The NSW mini-outbreak around Christmas 2020 was not an excuse because Australia had been clear of Covid since mid-Nov, and the delay until mid-April cut out a large swath of time when the bubble could have been open. Instead, it would only be open for 2 ½ months. Also, the initially extremely slow vaccine rollout that was planned to go past January 2022 would have made it impossible for many New Zealanders to travel overseas for Christmas in 2021 since many destinations required a vaccine pass, yet another desirable travel time that was being denied to New Zealanders.

**Related Questions:**

-What was the content of so-called negotiations to create an Australian-wide bubble agreement and how would it have differed from the agreement and mechanism that we ended up with?

-Why didn't we try to partner with other nations that didn't have covid in the community and create a system of MIQ entry into this generalized bubble to greatly increase capacity and spur tourism between those different countries?

-Did the govt understand/accept that a mini-outbreak of a few cases (below 40) was greatly unlikely to lead to cases arriving from those provinces/countries?

## **Question: How was any discussion of an alternative to the elimination strategy effectively blocked from mainstream discussion?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It was clear from the history of pandemics and the immediate response to vaccines by the rest of the world in the beginning of 2021 that the elimination strategy would not be a long term viable strategy. It was important that New Zealand be able to discuss how we would move on from the elimination strategy, and much of the madness that occurred after October 2021 was due to the lack of this discussion.**

### **Summary:**

Numerous groups wanted to talk about a Plan B, an alternative to elimination, but they were never able or allowed to gain traction with the mainstream NZ public. It was obvious that the government had found maintaining the fiction that the elimination policy would continue on indefinitely was very politically advantageous, and this was yet another negative consequence of how the response was allowed to be linked to Labour.

### **Related Questions:**

-Were specific instructions given to social media surrogates by the Labour Party apparatus to “swarm and destroy” any discussion of an alternate strategy by spamming hysterical claims about mass deaths and outlandish long term effects of Covid infections?

**Question: Did the govt truly believe that it would be able to continue the elimination policy with a fully vaccinated public and open borders with tourists allowed in?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The “reconnecting to the world” press conference in mid 2021 showed how New Zealand was being hampered from realistic discussions of how to move on from the pandemic by the fantasy of being able to continue the elimination policy indefinitely.**

**Summary:**

That reconnecting press conference was very discouraging because it suggested that the elimination policy could be kept for several years, even after a high level of vaccination by the New Zealand public. By this point, it was quite clear that mass vaccination would not completely eliminate cases, just greatly constrain them, and make serious complications from any cases extremely unlikely. Also it was clear by that point that this level of protection would be sufficient for the public of most countries, so insisting on an elimination policy would quickly make New Zealand fall behind other countries in terms of mobility and freedoms. And the history of all previous pandemics made it clear that strategy would not be successful when a milder but highly transmissible mutation of the virus would occur.

**Related Questions:**

- Was there any prospective given about how previous pandemics progressed and ended in government discussion documents?
- Did the media ever ask questions about this approach given their knowledge about the policies being pursued by other countries?

**Question: Why did the language of vaccination adverts change from “This is the metaphorical door to freedom” to a much less promising “Greater Immunity means Greater Possibilities”?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This appeared to be a warning signpost of the govt trying to persist in general public restrictions even after a full vaccination level in the population had been achieved.**

**Summary:**

The change in language in the initial adverts compared to the later adverts is striking, and it is worth investigating whether there were internal discussion documents and communications inside the govt that suggested that they weren't willing to relinquish control even after full vaccination, especially in light of what happened in 2022.

**Related Questions:**

-Were different groups involved in creating the described advertisements?

## **Question: Did the Govt ever actually plan to be at the “front of the queue” for the vaccine rollout?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It was clear once vaccines were on the way that they would be a critical part of restoring normality. If the govt actually planned to be first in the queue, the result was an absolute failure and we need to understand how the plan failed. If the govt was just using that as rhetoric, then we need to understand why they lied about such a critical part of the response.**

### **Summary:**

Arguably one of our greatest failures was the relatively very low vaccination protection New Zealand citizens had by late August 2021, therefore squandering all the time Covid was eliminated from New Zealand to get the public prepared for when Covid would enter the community. Australia had a massive setback to its vaccination strategy when the public lost trust in AstraZenica, which was the primary vaccine it planned to use because it could be produced in Australia, and therefore had to jump late into the queue to get other vaccines, and yet they STILL ended up constantly ahead of New Zealand in terms of vaccination, even with 5 times the population.

New Zealand had a relatively small population, and had been a testbed for rollouts of other technology in the past, and had no major setback in terms of the vaccine that was planned for use, so if the govt had actually planned to have an early vaccine rollout, that plan was a massive and absolute failure and the New Zealand public needs to understand all of the components of said failure so it never happens again with any future response.

If on the other hand, that was simply rhetoric, and the govt had no actual intention to have an early rollout, then we need to understand how they could have fundamentally misunderstood that their responsibility was to put New Zealand citizens first ahead of the rest of the world. It is especially important if the delay was a political ploy to have power over the general New Zealand population for longer.

### **Related Questions:**

- What were the actual dates that the vaccine was ordered, and when were they expected to be delivered at the time of order?
- Why did the govt display a completely fictional graph (just drawn for aesthetic purposes, not backed by any actual data) of the rollout during an early media conference? Was this because there was no actual modelling done at the time?
- Was the govt told of delays in vaccine delivery that were not passed on to the media?
- Did they ever consider importing people trained to do vaccination from Australia for a one time massive effort due to our small population?

**Question: Was the govt actually choosing to have a slow vaccine rollout by May/June 2021 to benefit the international community, or was this rhetoric to cover up logistical incompetency?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**If this was true, the effects of the Delta outbreak were caused by a govt that absolutely failed in its duty to New Zealand Citizens to consider their welfare and freedoms first. If this was just rhetoric to cover up logistical failings, then why wasn't the govt looking for 3rd party purchases?**

**Summary:**

Numerous regional health publications about the vaccine rollout claimed that New Zealand deliberately had a slow rollout to "help others in the world who need it more." After the Delta outbreak laid the government's failures bare, that claim was swiftly withdrawn from any publications. If that claim was true, it was an outrageous failure in the govt's duty towards New Zealand citizens and also an indication of overconfidence leading to incompetence. When the Delta outbreak started in Australia, it should have been a clear indication that we could no longer be complacent about the low proportion of vaccination.

If this was just a lie to cover up our inability to procure vaccines in a timely manner, then it shows a complete lack of proactiveness by the govt. By June, demand for the vaccine had significantly dropped among populations in the USA, meaning that third party purchases were certainly a possibility.

**Related Questions:**

-How many regional vaccination bulletins made this claim?



**Question: Was the govt sincere when it said in Q1/Q2 2021 that vaccination would be completely optional and no one would be coerced into taking it and there would be no negative domestic consequences for unvaccinated people in the general population?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was a constructive approach that was almost certainly driven by the MOH. Based on how the govt changed its position later, it is important to see if the govt was sincere about that approach at the time and the rationale that was being used within discussion papers and communications within the govt. If it was sincere, it is very important to understand how the rationale changed while the science did not.**

**Summary:**

It is clear that the MOH supported a voluntary approach towards vaccination as that had been shown to be best practice. It is important to investigate the thoughts and the rationale of the govt at that time to contrast when they changed to a much more coercive and combative stance against the unvaccinated. The 'Science' hadn't changed between the two periods, but the political situation certainly had. Was the non-coercive approach based on the false premise that the elimination policy could be maintained indefinitely? Or does the difference show that the shift to a coercive approach was purely political?

**Related Questions:**

-What was the main emphasis around vaccination in those early discussion documents? Was it about reducing the risk of serious illness or was it about highly reducing or eliminating transmission?

**Question: Was the govt observing the drop in Level 2 compliance in the rest of New Zealand during the February and March 2021 Auckland outbreaks?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Abusing the level system, such as level changes made in the South Island, led to fading compliance which would have been dangerous if the restrictions were actually needed in the first place.**

**Summary:**

By the time the L2 change was made in March 2021, people in the South Island had suffered under 3 reintroductions of restrictions without any cases to justify the changes. Observation of many L2 restrictions such as social distancing had almost completely disappeared, and the only restrictions that were actually being enforced were restrictions in numbers causing events to be canceled, which led to much resentment.

The govt seemed to take a compliant population for granted, which would not have boded well if these restrictions had actually been necessary.

**Related Questions:**

-Did the govt create observation reports about how well restrictions had worked or had been perceived to work after every period of level escalation? If not, were they looking at any actual evidence that these restrictions were useful or just assuming that they were necessary?

## **Question: How did the human right abuse of a “pure lottery” MIQ queue escape any actual hard media questions and human right scrutiny?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt changing MIQ allocations to a pure lottery with no priority queue for previous failures was an avoidable human rights abuse that was eventually ruled unlawful by the High Court after almost 9 months.**

### **Summary:**

As the number of people attempting to return to NZ increased, the place allocation was made a pure lottery, with people attempting to gain a place being given a random chance, with no consideration for people who had missed out several times previously. The govt was told that this was a human rights problem, did nothing about that, and then was able to dodge any kind of extensive criticism about it for more than half a year. The govt always framed this as a balancing act between the people wanting to return vs the safety of the people already inside New Zealand, but this was actually yet another negative consequence of the extremely slow vaccine rollout. Other nations were completing their vaccination rollouts and opening their borders, and the responsible approach would have been to increase the speed of New Zealand's vaccination rollout, which would have been a win for both people wanting to return and the people already inside New Zealand. Instead, the govt embarked on a process of demonizing returning New Zealanders via dismissive responses and the language employed by surrogates on social media. This approach eventually led to the govt downfall with Bellis.

### **Related Questions:**

-Were surrogates being instructed by the Labour Party Apparatus to swarm any media story about a returnee stuck outside New Zealand with a narrative that said returnees didn't care about the health of New Zealanders already within the country and were being “selfish”?

**Question: How did the govt come to the decision to allow people to travel from NSW to NZ without pre-departure tests, which led directly to the Delta outbreak?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This decision completely wrecked our “world-leading response”, and was such an inexplicable decision that it signals a complete lack of perspective or theoretical understanding of how MIQ was able to work, and therefore needs detailed investigation.**

**Summary:**

This policy was supposedly adopted because there was a concern that prospective kiwis traveling back to NZ could be infected with Covid in the process of being tested for Covid. That is an absolutely flabbergasting rationale since there were no examples of that happening in ANY nation. Due to the lack of that requirement, a person travelled back to Auckland who was already highly infectious with Delta Covid and that allowed Covid to break the confines of MIQ.

It was extremely important that the people who were simply isolating from overseas travel weren't exposed to people highly infectious to Covid, and that's why people who were Covid+ were immediately transferred to a quarantine facility, before they would become highly infectious and spread it through the rest of the facility.

So the decision allowed something that would (and was) very damaging to the containment of MIQ to occur because they were worried about something that was EXTREMELY unlikely to ever happen. Furthermore, even with a large outbreak, it was still relatively very unlikely that a given person in NSW was infected. It shows an absolute lack of perspective that is very worrying.

**Related Questions:**

-What made the decision makers think there was ANY credible risk of people getting infected during Covid testing?

-Did the decision makers have ONE credible case of a person getting infected during Covid testing?

-Do the government discussion papers make it clear how important it was that entrants to MIQ should not be highly infectious with Covid?

**Question: Did the govt truly believe there was a public health justification for a nationwide Level 4 lockdown with no cases outside Auckland, and were they making any actual attempts to make it as short as possible?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The Level 4 lockdown that was ordered for all of New Zealand when the unlinked Delta case was discovered was the epitome of the abuse of the level system for political reasons. All perspective seems to have been lost.**

**Summary:**

When the unlinked case was discovered in Devonport, the govt embarked on an all out campaign to save the elimination policy regardless of the collateral damage to the economy and the freedom of New Zealanders. Unlike the previous national lockdown, there was no pretense that this outbreak would lead to a collapsed state or a complete breakdown of law and order, and there was already a relatively high proportion of vulnerable people vaccinated. This was solely to save the elimination policy that the govt had relied on. There is no denying that this was very politically popular at the time, but that shouldn't be the criteria for those coercive restrictions.

The govt originally said the lockdown would be re-evaluated after 3 days, and then came up with more and more outlandish reasons to persist with the L4 for the entire two weeks, including testing sewage that they should know was connected to MIQ facilities, despite no cases emerging outside of Auckland except for a few already contained cases in Wellington. Then all of New Zealand had to endure another week at Level 3 despite no new cases emerging outside of Auckland, with extremely questionable rationale.

**Related Questions:**

-Was the govt ever actually planning to release NZ from Level 4 after 3 days, or in any period less than 14 days, or was that just designed to make the lockdown more politically palatable?

-Did the govt understand and/or accept that even if cases had emerged after 7 days in other parts of New Zealand, it is extremely unlikely that those people who had already immediately been isolating would have caused unlinked transmission? If so, how did they possibly justify another week of Level 3 after 2 weeks of no cases emerging in Level 4?

## **Question: Was the govt officially aware of the scale of non-compliance to the Auckland Lockdown?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**There appeared to be a serious disconnect between the govt and Auckland around what residents would be willing to do. The govt was employing the lockdown almost solely to save the elimination strategy, which was unlikely to succeed if there was a great deal of non-compliance.**

### **Summary:**

Within the first few days of the lockdown, social media was flooded with people claiming obvious non-compliance with the lockdown (mainly in the form of very audible parties) and video evidence of such. This non-compliance probably had wide neighborhood variation, where some neighborhoods were highly aware of it, while others may have been completely aware and believed people were highly compliant. Knowing that people were unlikely to be compliant this time around should have informed the response since it was a pure gambit on whether the elimination policy could continue.

### **Related Questions:**

- Were the police aware of the flagrant non-compliance and were they informing the govt about it?
- Were the police actively attempting enforcement activities? If so, how many enforcement activities were attempted in the first 2 weeks followed by the next two weeks?
- Did the govt attempt to gauge compliance independently from the police?
- Did the govt disallow comments about this non-compliance to save face, or to avoid encouraging non-compliance in others?
- Was the police or govt aware of the large numbers of people who fled Auckland for their holiday homes in Northland? Did the govt take note that no cases resulted from these people, and use that as a calibration factor?



## **Question: Did the govt understand how inappropriate it was to be presenting the hysterical Hendry report to the media on Sept 23rd, 2021?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This hysterical report made it hard for a scared minority to move on from the elimination strategy even after it had been discarded by the govt and led to continuing discrimination and fear against Aucklanders even after they reached a high vaccination target.**

### **Summary:**

The Hendry report made alarmist and hysterical predictions about the effect Covid would have on an 80% vaccinated population, predictions that had already been disproven by the reality in many countries, and was immediately criticized and panned by other scientists affiliated with the govt. It was an obvious political ploy to justify the continued attempt to save the elimination policy. Once the elimination policy had finally been discarded, the govt released new studies that contradicted the Hendry report. However, the govt was unable to unring that bell and several groups continued to use the Hendry report as justification for hysteria and calls for Aucklanders to not leave Auckland during the holiday period.

### **Related Questions:**

- Was this 'study' commissioned for the explicit political purpose of justifying continuing the effort to attempt elimination?
- If not, did the govt make any attempt to validate the 'predictions' of the study against the data of \*any\* other country?
- Why didn't the media observe the mass gatherings and rushing of the field that was occurring within College Football stadiums in the USA at the exact time and ask for a perspective reality check by the govt?
- Did the govt understand how much perspective had been lost when they saw gang members trying to smuggle KFC back into Auckland?

**Question: Did the govt understand that there was actually hidden and unlinked community transmission in Auckland in Sept of 2021 and was an actual test of lockdowns?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It is important to know if previous counting of cases from airport workers that had been reported as “unlinked cases” when they actually weren’t (as compared to cases already in the community that was escaping contact tracing) had corrupted the govt models and predictions. It is also important to note that this was the first time in the Covid response where a lockdown was somewhat justified by the Level system criteria, as compared to all previous lockdowns, and the measures led to an absolute failure to eliminate. Lockdowns were a failure when they *\*actually\** mattered.**

**Summary:**

As September went on, and the case numbers dropped, it appeared that the lockdown might actually be working. But the number of unlinked cases continued to increase as a proportion of reported cases, which was a good indication that the lockdown was actually failing.

**Related Questions:**

- Was there any actual criteria given around unlinked cases this time?
- Did the govt understand that the prime criteria of a lockdown succeeding is a decrease to 0 of unlinked cases, not a decrease in cases of people who were already isolating?

**Question: Why didn't the govt make a clear announcement about the end of the elimination policy and the new direction immediately after it was abandoned?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Once the govt had accepted that the elimination policy would no longer be possible, it was very important to present this shift in mindset to the public and an enumeration of how this changed each aspect of the response. Instead, the lack of clarity continued to hinder and confuse the response. It was unacceptable how the elimination policy became a partisan decision and political meal ticket for one party.**

**Summary:**

The media had to guess and parse words to determine that the elimination policy was in fact ending. In any science-based and productive response, it is quite easy to see that this shift in mindset should have been discussed with the public immediately. ACT presented an example of how that should have been done with a sample speech called "The Great Tack". The ideas given in that speech were derided by Labour at first, but in the end, NZ had a semi-freedom day into the TLS.

**Related Questions:**

-Had the govt truly accepted that the elimination policy had ended? If so, what was the rationale for continuing with policies that still treated any (extremely low) risk of transmission as unacceptable, such as:

-The public use of RATs?

-An extremely strict Auckland border that didn't allow general "testing-out" and/or internal isolation?

-The endless L2 in areas that still had never had any cases since May of 2020?

**Question: Did the govt understand that achieving each percentage vaccinated above 80% would be more and more difficult as they pushed into a more and more vaccine hesitant population? Was this actually their political intention?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It seemed that the govt was deliberately kicking up rancor with the vaccine hesitant, and this led to a complete breakdown in community cohesiveness by 2022. It is important that any future response considers the drawbacks as well as the advantages.**

**Summary:**

The govt aimed for a vaccine percentage that was higher than most countries that were already successfully living with Covid. Their rhetoric seemed to imply that there were no drawbacks in aiming for this approach and the increase in difficulty would be linear, when in fact there were negative consequences and the difficulty increased exponentially as more and more hesitant people had to be vaccinated to reach that target.

**Related Questions:**

- Were there any discussion documents that considered any drawbacks or tradeoffs for any of the New Zealand population, including those who didn't want to be vaccinated?
- Did the discussion documents consider separate effects on the protective effects of vaccination vs a possible reduction in transmission? Or did it assume that both effects would be present? Which was more important to the govt?
- Was the government conducting political polling on different vaccine targets?
- Was the government conducting political polling on public sentiment about how the unvaccinated should be treated?
- Was there any pushback from any groups that were supposedly interested in human rights about a "world high total"? If so, how did the govt respond to them?
- What did earlier MOH advice and/or govt discussion documents say an acceptable target would have been back in May/June of 2021?

**Question: How early could the govt have made the second and third party purchases of vaccines if they had actually tried to do so?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It is important to know what processes could have made the vaccine rollout occur in a swifter manner since the lack of vaccination led to another lockdown. It is important to quantify the extent of the opportunity cost.**

**Summary:**

The govt suddenly managed to get a large amount of supply into NZ when they had motivation. Of course, this was already too late, and New Zealanders suffered greatly because of the slow rollout. It is absolutely unacceptable in any further event to ever be content with wasting time with a slow rollout. It is also absolutely unacceptable if this slow rollout was done for political advantage and/or for international virtue signaling.

**Related Questions:**

-When was the first time that the govt approached another country for a 2nd or 3rd party purchase of vaccines?

**Question: Why did the govt initially decry any suggestion of a “freedom day” back in Oct 22, 2021, only to announce one (for December) on Nov 2nd, 2021?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It is important to know if this was a political ploy to put more public pressure on the hesitant unvaccinated. If so, this was another “failed gambit” that never left the minds of many.**

**Summary:**

On Oct 22nd, the govt suggested that NZ would only enter the TLS once all areas/DHBs of NZ had reached the 90% target. This led to the media creating bar graphs with finish lines and a public weary of overwrought restrictions staring at those graphs and decrying people who didn't want to get vaccinated as stopping NZ from reaching its goal, as the graphs suggested that NZ wouldn't reach that goal in \*all\* areas until Feb 2022. Only less than 2 weeks later, on Nov 2nd, the govt announced a “freedom day” of December 1st. Despite that change, the narrative that “the unvaccinated” were causing tighter restrictions on New Zealanders never really left the discourse.

**Related Questions:**

- Was the govt always planning to announce a freedom day within a few weeks, and the insistence on everyone hitting that high vaxed target was a political ploy?
- Did the govt ever think insisting that every DHB hit the target was actually a legitimate criteria? Did they not do their own calculations about what the consequences of that criteria would be in terms of date?
- Did the govt understand that the constant changes in “absolute” statements was fuelling uncertainty among businesses, and cynicism among NZers?

**Question: Who within the upper levels of the govt knew that the people who traveled into Northland had actually been given approval through the process, and when did they know it?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt used its power to spread a damaging lie about specific New Zealanders, used that lie to justify an unnecessary lockdown, and the subsequent refusal by the police (rightly so) to prosecute made Aucklanders very cynical about the enforcement of those border measures.**

**Summary:**

It is absolutely unacceptable and outrageous that the govt ever reported that these travelers had broken the laws/rules when they had mistakenly been given approval by the govt. It showed the extremely worrying trend at this point of it being politically advantageous for the govt to attack certain New Zealanders.

**Related Questions:**

- When was the mistake discovered and reported in any level of govt?
- Is there a transcript of any discussions between the Cabinet and the people who normally processed those exemption requests?
- Was there a process to reverse approval when said mistakes had been made?
- When was the first time that the police was asked if they planned to prosecute the Northland travelers?
- Was there any pressure put on the police by the govt to obscure why charges weren't being brought against the travelers?

## **Question: Did the Labour Party apparatus instruct surrogates to attack the couple who traveled to Wanaka?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**These attacks accomplished nothing that had to do with public health, and would show a govt fully focused on using the pandemic response as a political vehicle.**

### **Summary:**

Two people who had been given an Auckland border exemption abused the terms of that exemption and traveled to Wanaka. They had already tested and isolated and confirmed they were Covid -, so they never had posed a risk of spreading Covid. Yet the quantity of attacks by journalists and Labour surrogates on social media was monumental, and the language used in those attacks was over the top. It would be useful to confirm this as a deliberate political strategy.

### **Related Questions:**

-Did the Labour Party ever instruct their surrogates to attack the people who were constantly violating the border rules and were actually spreading Covid around the North Island, which were gang members?



**Question: Was it fair that NZ immigration used any Auckland border violations as justification to refuse any future visas/permits from those migrants?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This appears to be a particularly severe consequence for people who never spread Covid and therefore had no negative public health impact.**

**Summary:**

There were numerous stories in the media in 2022 and early 2023 about migrants who had violated the Auckland border rules (many of whom had their families separated by said border) being rejected for renewing their permits/visas and having to leave New Zealand. Were they specifically directed to do so? Absolutely none of these violations by migrants ever spread Covid, they had been conscientious about testing and isolating before sneaking across the border.

**Related Questions:**

-What other offenses by migrants automatically lead to their visas/permits being rejected for renewal?

**Question: Since the govt had apparently ended the elimination policy, what was the point in continuing endless Level 2 restrictions in areas that had no cases?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**There was not a single area in the South Island that met the criteria for applying Level 2 until the South Island entered the TLS, and there were great costs in continuing those restrictions.**

**Summary:**

The proportion of the people who had been vaccinated was constantly increasing, and the fact that Delta hadn't spread in any of those mass people events (such as a covid + person being on the SkyCity casino floor) should have disproven the hysterics about how easy Delta was to spread. There could have been a temporary numbers restriction of 500 or 1000 people at an event until vaccine passes were brought in. Instead, people in the South Island had to deal with overwrought restrictions that were based on the premise of Level 2 being a rather temporary step, so many private organizations such as malls invoked sterner restrictions than were actually asked for in the level system. It has to be asked if these elevated restrictions were due to an unwillingness to truly abandon elimination, or a complete lack of perspective about risk, or more likely, it was considered politically advantageous.

**Related Questions:**

-Did the MOH really only float the idea of the South Island returning to Level 1 on the proviso of complete elimination when the prospect had already started becoming slim by mid-September?

-Were these unnecessarily strict restrictions kept for political reasons because moving from L1 to Orange with the vax passports would be a tougher "sell" than moving from L2 to Orange in the TLS?

**Question: Since the MOH only recommended vaccine passes for events with more than 1000 ppl attending, why did the government instead push for and implement widespread vaccine pass requirements?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Vaccination in general is one of our best public health weapons, the MOH did not think that this level of vaccine mandate was necessary and this level of coercion has badly hurt vaccination adoption in the future. It was and is unacceptable if the govt decision was made mainly for political acclaim.**

**Summary:**

This is a prime example of when the govt departed from MOH advice, and since the govt quickly acted to make a high vaccination rate its new political meal-ticket, the sudden widespread requirement of vaccine passports after the non-coercive promises earlier was very suspicious, and spoke to an overtly political motive.

**Related Questions:**

- Did the govt have any explicit guarantee or studies from the vaccine manufacturers that transmission would be greatly reduced from vaccination?
- Was there any cost/benefit analysis done on the relatively small risk of transmission in smaller venues vs the social costs of coercion?
- Did the govt do any analysis of countries who had considered vaccine passes but had chosen not to require them?

**Question: Why did it take so long to implement a system where vaccine passes were issued and validated?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This could have saved the Canterbury A&P show and cup day and other numerous events by late October. It's important to know if this was due to pure complacency about elimination and is more evidence of an overt political component that was only needed once the elimination policy failed**

**Summary:**

It took about 2 ½ months between the beginning of the Delta outbreak and vaccine passes becoming available, after having almost a year's worth of notification that vaccines were going to become available. It is important to know when planning started on this system to understand what the govt was thinking during the beginning and middle of 2021. The failure to not have this ready when it was clear that at least some private organizations were going to need it was a huge economic loss.

**Related Questions:**

-When was the first proposal for the vaccine pass web interface and app first passed to the govt?

-How long was the implementation estimated to take and how long did it actually take?

## **Question: Did the govt ACTUALLY not find the initial link from MIQ to the community for the Delta Outbreak in August 2021?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This information may have been hidden from the public due to the huge discontent the response had swelled in the New Zealand public, and also for political reasons to increase fear. Neither was acceptable.**

### **Summary:**

Bloomfield suggested that they may have found the link between MIQ and the community, then as abuse increased towards the Pasifika community because the “Superspreader event” was a Pasifika church service, suddenly he withdrew that claim. Was it because the suspected link was Pasifika? It would not have been the MIQ worker’s fault, it was the govt’s fault for not using RATs for much more regular testing even though they had been available for almost 8 months at that point. This showed how the govt’s approach which had spread hysteria across the New Zealand population was leading to damaging emotional and social reactions in the community. Was this also withheld because the outbreak seemed more uncontrolled to the public without the link from MIQ to the community being known?

### **Related Questions:**

- What was the specific evidence that Bloomfield pointed to that made this person a likely candidate as the link between MIQ and the community?
- What was the frequency of testing in that MIQ at the time?

## **Question: Did the govt really believe there was a public health basis behind the “steps” down in Level 3, instead of putting Auckland in Level 2.5?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**These “steps” contained highly cynical ‘rules’ that were unlikely to be followed by anybody but the most highly fearful or dedicated people. These restrictions played well politically, but were unlikely to be actually followed or done effectively and therefore had a very questionable public health justification.**

### **Summary:**

At the beginning of October 2021, in the face of obviously increasing non-compliance in Auckland, the govt admitted that the elimination strategy had come to an end, and unveiled a new framework of restrictions to be used in Auckland. Reading between the lines, these “steps” appeared designed to allow the govt to say that existing outdoor behaviour was now complying with the rules, while still containing restrictions that would soothe the fears of the fearful. One absolutely ridiculous rule forbade visitors from using an indoor bathroom. This was the clear beginning of cynical restrictions putting an unfair burden on those who would comply with any terms, whereas others would simply ignore the ridiculous rules, so they didn’t accomplish anything in terms of public health.

### **Related Questions:**

- Did the govt understand the widespread abuse and misunderstanding of the “expanding your bubble” rules in Level 3 which made it questionable if bubbles were still effective after an extended period at Level 3?
- What was the real reason the govt refused to employ the much more sound Level 2.5 (10 ppl limits with no bubbles) instead of inventing these “steps”?
- Did the govt think they would lose their main talking point about why the South Island shouldn’t be in Level 1 if Auckland was put into any kind of Level 2?
- Did the govt understand that the no inside bathroom rule if actually followed would have stopped almost all visits by families by toilet trained toddlers?
- Did the govt understand the absolutely miniscule proportion of the population that were Covid+, even in Auckland, and that the only people likely to follow said rules were almost certainly already vaccinated, lowering the risk even further?

-Did the Labour Party tell their surrogates to target Barry Sopher after he made it quite obvious how idiotic the bathroom rule was via questions in press conferences?

-When Auckland moved into Step 2 of Level 3, vaccination levels exceeded 80% in Auckland, and people were now allowed inside of retail again. How could they justify not allowing dining to be provided outdoors?

-Was the govt actually planning to utilize Step 3 of 3?

**Question: Why did the govt believe it needed a TLS restriction framework after vaccination, instead of just setting discrete restrictions for a short period of time? Was it all about creating a framework for extensive vaccine passes?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The TLS was a clear catalyst for New Zealand keeping restrictions much longer than was necessary, and was abused even worse than the Level system.**

**Summary:**

The TLS mainly appeared to serve two political purposes, and not very many public health purposes: To make it clear that lockdowns were going away (but then that was counteracted by continued claims that we'd go back to the level system if the TLS couldn't control an outbreak), and to insert vaccine pass requirements in all but the essential parts of daily life. The criteria was even more vague than the level system, and was basically ignored since the inception. Using the analogy of a traffic light, New Zealanders rightly expected that we'd spend much of our time in either Red or Green, with Orange only being a transition period, but that was never how it was used.

**Related Questions:**

-When the Level system was being designed, did they ever consider that another framework might be necessary that excluded lockdowns, or was it important that when the level system was no longer needed, the country completely move on from restrictions?

-Since the MOH did not recommend vaccine passes for anything except gatherings of >1000 ppl, and the TLS was mainly about putting widespread vaccine passes into effect, did they privately recommend against it?

-Did the govt still think that they could move to a pseudo elimination strategy once again, and the TLS would be around for many years?

-Did the govt ever plan to use the green setting, or was that simply a carrot to incentivise "good behaviour"?



**Question: Was there any formal pushback on the govt about the “2 classes of ppl? Yep, yep, that’s what it is” response when the TLS was being unveiled?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The above political response was NEVER acceptable when it came to Human Rights, was clearly trying to create an antagonistic relationship with people strongly opposed to vaccination, and went against Bloomfield’s main statement about the pandemic response. Did any of the “watchdog groups/departments” within or just outside the govt ever mount a pushback campaign?**

**Summary:**

This overly combative tone change from the govt set the large protest movement in motion. It was completely ineffective as a public health message, and seemed to be playing directly towards people who were greatly fearful of Covid. It should have set any watchdogs who were concerned about the BOR into action.

**Related Questions:**

- Did the MOH officially complain about that message since it was completely in opposition to “People are the solution, not the problem”?
- Did the Human Rights Commission ever officially complain?
- Did any of the churches, Anglican, Catholic or otherwise, complain about that message?

**Question: How did the govt allow the “Two shots to do the deed” line to be included in their advert? Was there any vetting of the message?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This potentially extremely serious claim (if it was taken seriously) shows how loose claims had become in official adverts from the govt.**

**Summary:**

That was almost certainly a throw-away line in a youth-centered advert and not a serious statement from the govt that unvaccinated people were not allowed to have sex anymore, but including what would have been an extremely serious human rights violation in a pandemic response advertisement shows how disconnected these communications had become from the science of public health. Since the widespread vaccine pass requirements were not recommended by the MOH, it stands to reason that the statements made in this advert were not vetted by the MOH. This may have been the first fully politically based advert of the pandemic response.

**Related Questions:**

- Because the production values of this advert were so low compared to other ads including the TLS introduction adverts running at the same time, was this run through a completely different process? Who was actually vetting the claims made in the advert and decided when it would be run?
- Did the Human Rights Commission complain about this message?

**Question: When the MOH stated that MIQ was no longer necessary because there was no longer any difference in risk, why wasn't MIQ torn down within a few weeks by the govt?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**MIQ was an obvious barrier to the fundamental duty of a govt to its citizens, to allow them to return home to sovereign soil. Such a fundamental barrier should have been dismantled immediately when it no longer served an emergency public health purpose.**

**Summary:**

As the vaccination levels around New Zealand increased, the MOH stated by the end of October or beginning of November that there was no longer any significant difference in risk of Covid transmission between a returned citizen and people already in the community (especially in Auckland), and therefore MIQ should end. Instead, the govt dragged its feet in planning how MIQ should end, planning lead times in terms of months instead of weeks, and then used Omicron as an excuse about why MIQ shouldn't end (more about that in another question). This seemed highly political, due to surrogates on social media continuing labeling people wanting to come back to New Zealand as "Selfish", and govt being continually dismissive about the horrible circumstances people who were unable to return found themselves, while still providing spots for overseas performers such as DJs at an elevated rate. That conflict would have ended if MIQ had been ended.

**Related Questions:**

-How could the govt justify MIQ when an Auckland resident was allowed to cross over the regional border with proof of vaccination or a negative test, and all MIQ returnees had pre-departure tested negative and were vaccinated?

-Did the govt run regular polls about MIQ and how returnees were perceived by New Zealanders?

-Did the Labour Party organization actively push an anti-returnees narrative via surrogates on social media?

-Was the govt primarily worried about political fallout from returnees that didn't follow any self-isolation requirements because it would remind New Zealanders too much of March 2020?

-Did the Human Rights Commission ever complain to the govt about MIQ still being required in December 2021 despite the MOH recommendation?

**Question: Did the govt ever understand the huge amount of anti-Auckland sentiment they created, and did they ever make a concerted effort to counteract it?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**After Aucklanders had suffered a long extended lockdown and had reached their vaccination targets, they still faced hysteria and negative sentiment from people in the rest of New Zealand, all driven by the early attempts by the govt to save the elimination strategy. This surely had negative effects on the cohesiveness of the response and the mental health of Aucklanders.**

**Summary:**

Even as Aucklanders were approaching the 90% vaccination target, there were loud demands on social media that they not be allowed to travel out of Auckland, especially into rural areas. These groups continued making (absolute nonsense) claims originally aired by the Hendry 'study'. This sentiment led to music festivals being pushed to cancel because of the "risk" of Aucklanders travelling to the rural areas of the festival, and much of NZ had a negative sentiment of Aucklanders even if they weren't as vocal. This was completely the govt's fault due to the continuing hysteria they caused, and the complete lack of perspective of how Covid was being handled in the rest of the world, which would have immediately shown the falseness of those hysterical claims. The govt never effectively pushed back on that sentiment, leaving it to fester until it was finally torn away by Omicron and the protests.

**Related Questions:**

-Was the govt focus grouping/polling the hysterics and finding that they risked losing power if they effectively pushed back?

-How could the govt justify requiring proof of vaccination or a negative test from Aucklanders when there were cases all across New Zealand by December, and no other areas required that? Did they understand that it was going to be clearly ineffective and quickly dropped (ended up ending 'officially' on Jan 17th 2022, but

physical enforcement appeared to drop within a week of the border opening), but yet still provided justification to treat Aucklanders different?

-How much enforcement effort was actually expended around proof of vaccination/negative test by December 21st, 2021?

-Was there any public health study done on how effective requiring Aucklanders to have proof of vaccination or a negative test would be on actual spread, or as highly likely, was this just a highly visible political effort?

-Did the Human Rights Commission complain to the govt about restricting DOMESTIC movement of unvaccinated Aucklanders?

-Did the govt understand that this hysteria put the promises of “two shots for summer” at risk? Did they care?

## **Question: Did the govt ever intend to go to green on the TLS at any point in time?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The gaming of the TLS criteria started immediately, and never stopped through the life of the system. It was the excuse to keep New Zealanders in a state of fear and hysteria throughout almost all of 2022.**

### **Summary:**

By the end of December/beginning of January, Covid cases had dropped significantly, especially if they were viewed as number of households with cases instead of individual cases. It was clear that any threat of massive Delta spread from Auckland had been well overestimated, and there was very little load on the health system. By any actual criteria of health system load or transmission risk, the South Island should have started in Green immediately, and almost all of New Zealand should have been in green by the beginning of 2022. And yet, excuses about why we weren't in green for precautionary reasons immediately started and never ended. Since vaccine pass requirements were greatly diminished in Green and the govt was obviously trying to push a political culture war against the unvaccinated, was there any possible criteria that the govt was have accepted to move to green?

### **Related Questions:**

-Did the govt understand that the hysteria had become too overwrought when the Auckland NYE fireworks were cancelled for 2021, or did they actually encourage that? NYE Fireworks in 2020 with unconstrained crowds was a political triumph, having a cloud over NZ even after our vax goals were achieved in 2021 would have been a political negative?

## **Question: How many incoming entertainers were allowed to isolate outside of a MIQ facility in November and December 2021?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This appeared to be a clear example of the govt granting favoured status for a few people they wanted to be allowed inside the country, while still blocking other New Zealanders wanting to return home, all while MOH had said that MIQ should have already ended.**

### **Summary:**

One detail of the incoming entertainer that contracted Omicron around December 26th would have been of particular interest to New Zealanders still stuck outside and unable to return home, that he had been isolated in some kind of private facility. This was different to the case of incoming cricket teams, who needed a logistical setup that allowed them to practice while not coming in contact with the New Zealand public. This seemed to be a clear-cut case of special treatment, bordering on corruption, and that impression wasn't helped by a pharmacist being bullied to provide a then rare RAT.

### **Related Questions:**

Was the "trial" of allowing returned travellers to isolate at home simply a way of covering up certain people getting a more favored isolation 'situation'?



## **Question: Was the govt deliberately trying to NOT detect that Omicron had entered the community?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt was claiming that Omicron spread into the community would require stronger restrictions, but the variant testing policy made it impossible to see if Omicron had entered the community.**

### **Summary:**

The govt had a policy of limiting testing of variant types (detecting whether it was Omicron or Delta) to people who were border related. The govt claimed that this was to stop Omicron from escaping into the community, but in fact this policy made it almost impossible to see if Omicron had made it into the community because it wasn't checking whether random cases were Omicron. This was extremely suspicious because the govt had a clear political motive to have a Christmas and early summer period with few restrictions. The date when Omicron was actually confirmed in the community (Sun, Jan 23rd, the Sunday before even the longest summer vacation period was likely to end) was also extremely suspicious, especially when tracing the chain of transmission of cases without any kind of border link suggest that Omicron had ACTUALLY entered the community by the very beginning of January.

### **Related Questions:**

- Was there any communication between the govt and MOH about random variant testing?
- Was there any correspondence with MIQ providers with extended rationale about why variant type sequencing was restricted to border related people?
- Did any members of the media ask why the govt wasn't sequencing all new incoming cases for variant type given how low the number of cases had become?

**Question: Did the govt understand and/or accept that MIQ was going to be unable to contain Omicron, based on other quarantine attempts around the world?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt had lost all public health rationale for keeping MIQ and yet this fundamental barrier to the right of a New Zealand citizen to return was kept until March for apparent political reasons. The public discourse had become so poisoned that opposition leaders had to accede to these measures.**

**Summary:**

When Omicron started arriving in Europe from South African flights in December 2021, many countries including Germany originally attempted to quarantine the passengers. Despite those efforts, Omicron quickly spread in those hotels and those quarantine attempts were quickly abandoned. By the time the govt cynically announced that MIQ would stay for longer due to Omicron on Dec 22nd, they should have known that MIQ would have been completely ineffective. Omicron had first been detected in NZ MIQ on Dec 16th, and the first detected leak of Omicron from MIQ must have occurred in early January at the latest based on the chain of infection from the Jan 23rd detection, so MIQ only contained Omicron for 2 ½ - 3 weeks at the most. Despite there now being no public health justification for MIQ, it remained, now for purely political reasons, until early March 2022, and would likely have remained even longer, likely until the end of March 2022, had the govt not gotten into a public spat with Charlotte Bellis and lost.

**Related Questions:**

- Did the govt understand that if MIQ was unable to contain Omicron, then even if they wanted to give time for New Zealanders to get boosted, keeping MIQ around would not give New Zealanders that time?
- Did the govt truly believe in this “different chain of infections” rubbish rationale that surrogates were trying to push as a justification?
- Did the govt investigate that self-isolation outside of MIQ might have been more effective at containing Omicron due to less vectors of potential spread?

-Was the govt doing focus grouping/polling about the perceptions of people returning to New Zealand in late December 2021 and/or January of 2022?

**Question: Did the govt actually believe that the Red TLS setting was needed to respond to Omicron, even after seeing how Australia responded to Omicron?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The Red settings were both overkill in terms of disruption and were also completely ineffective in changing the amount of spread, so provided extremely questionable public health benefits.**

**Summary:**

The Red TLS setting limited gatherings to 100 ppl both inside and outside. This completely killed any later summer events. In comparison, Melbourne hosted the Australia Open and allowed up to 60% density, all the during the PEAK of its first Omicron outbreak. Australian states had relatively much looser restrictions during the outbreak except for a few weeks where there were more restrictions on hospitality, and attendance at sporting events was not constrained more than 50%, vs a blanket restriction of 100 people. When the number of NZ Covid cases is converted to per capita cases and time shifted to match the time period of the Australian outbreak, the comparison showed no significant differences in the pattern of spread or numbers between the two countries. So the restrictions imposed significant pain on New Zealand businesses without providing any benefit.

**Related Questions:**

-Was the govt doing focus grouping/polling on the perception of the govt if they increased/reduced restrictions?

-Did the govt understand that even if it wanted to decrease the possible load on the health system, if restrictions were not resulting in decreased spread, then they should be removed?

**Question: Why did the Red setting of the TLS not initially differentiate between indoor and outdoor events even though the govt acknowledged the much lower risk of outdoor transmission in previous statements and revisions to restrictions?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The govt could have allowed more summer events at a community scale to go ahead if they had allowed numbers of 250 or 500 to attend outdoor events.**

**Summary:**

It is rather puzzling why the govt reverted back to treating indoors and outdoor activities the same, during summer where many activities could have been moved outdoors if incentives were given. Was this yet another cynical political ploy to deliberately make outdoor events stop because the govt believed that the optics of outdoor events would be completely unacceptable during the Omicron outbreak period, even though they hadn't been stopped in Australia?

**Related Questions:**

-What do sections of govt discussion documents talking about the Level 2 revisions show vs the same sections talking about outdoor activities under the TLS? Were there any justifications given?

**Question: Did the govt understand or accept the numerous studies by early Feb 2022 that indicated no or very little difference in Omicron transmission by 2x vaccinated vs unvaccinated people?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It was a fundamental injustice to continue requiring the use of a vax pass based on 2x vaccinations when that now had very little or no effect on transmission. This injustice has had a huge and ongoing impact in New Zealand, and has greatly hurt public health by decreasing vaccination rates.**

**Summary:**

By early February 2022, there were at least 3 studies from Scandinavian countries showing 2x covid vaccinations made very little or no difference to Omicron transmission. This matched the effect that was being clearly seen in New Zealand Omicron cases, where vaccination status was now showing very little difference vs Delta cases were mostly spreading between unvaccinated people. These studies did show 3x vaxed did have somewhat of a significant effect on transmission, maybe up to 50%, but nothing close to the 90% or greater effectiveness that was being seen vs Delta with 2x vaxed. Of course, due to NZ's initially slow vaccine rollout, the govt couldn't require vax passes based on 3x vaxed without locking out most of the New Zealand population. That clearly didn't justify continuing a clearly non-scientifically supported onerous restriction on unvaccinated people for \*clearly\* political purposes.

**Related Questions:**

-If the govt wanted to keep this vaccination percentage 'meal ticket' around, why didn't it focus on how vaccination percentage had a clear impact on death rates, and make it all about protecting oneself?

-Why wasn't there ANY media coverage of those studies? Was it completely precluded by the PJIF, or was the media just so invested in the culture war against the unvaccinated?

## **Question: Did the govt understand and/or accept that contract tracing was absolutely useless against Omicron?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was one of the largest changes to how we approached the pandemic response since the beginning, and this change was horribly handled by the govt, leading to massive confusion up until the end of 2022.**

### **Summary:**

By mid-December 2021, many countries and municipalities had publicly stated that they were discontinuing contact tracing vs Omicron Covid, finding it had become completely hopeless. New Zealand did completely phase out contact tracing by “stage 3”, but didn’t tell people to stop using the app and didn’t tell businesses to take down the QR code. Furthermore, it gave an immediate DISINCENTIVE to use the app by increasing the isolation time for close contacts and Omicron cases during stage 1. This confusion was also added to by the disingenuous rationale of keeping MIQ because of “increased chains of transmission”, and people still thought that close contacts made a difference deep into 2022. As a result, a significant number of people continued scanning using the app well into 2022 when it was now useless.

### **Questions:**

- Did the govt have any aspirations to bring back contact tracing again, and that’s why it wasn’t immediately called out as unnecessary?
- Or did scanning and seeing other people scanning increase comfort among the fearful, and that’s why govt wanted it to continue happening despite it serving no actual purpose?

## **Question: Why was the govt so slow in importing RATs when they were the only thing that could have possibly slowed the initial Omicron outbreak?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The obsession the govt had with controlling the process of testing meant that they threw away their only chance of slowing an actually wide-spread Covid outbreak.**

### **Summary:**

The govt was absolutely allergic to allowing RAT usage in New Zealand because it could have allowed people to know they were Covid + and deliberately hide it, and their unrealistic apparent delusion that they could keep the elimination policy going indefinitely meant they never worked out the logistics of widescale importation until it was way too late, causing the govt to comander the supplies ordered by many private businesses.

If the govt had managed to import a significant quantity of RATs by early 2022, they could have distributed about 40 of them to a massive number of households, asked them to test every day (even without symptoms) for about 40 days, and the reward for doing so would be allowing to live without restrictions (and isolation if you were a close contact) for a few months after recording and recovering from an Omicron infection. Having done so could have reduced the initial spread by 80% or even more, which would have been a worthwhile goal if the govt was *\*actually\** concerned about reducing spread until people were able to get boosted.

### **Related Questions:**

- When was the first time the govt investigated a large scale purchase of RATs?
- Did the govt accept that RAT testing was going to become the primary form of testing at any time before the elimination policy was discontinued?
- Why didn't the govt immediately initiate a mass purchase of RATs once the elimination policy had ended?



**Question: Did the govt have a fixed amount of time it decided to wait after the Wellington Protest was broken up before finally ending vaccine passes?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This is a smoking gun of how political and unconnected to public health the response had become since Omicron had emerged.**

**Summary:**

The govt waited exactly 3 weeks after the Wellington protests had been ended by force before announcing that they were going to discontinue the use of vaccine passes. Since the rationale to do so existed before the protests started, the timing appeared to be overtly political. If internal communications can be obtained, it would be very instructive to see if they were discussing a period of time the govt had to wait so the protesters wouldn't say that they had "won".

The govt refused to reference any of the studies or practical measurements showing that 2x vaxed was almost completely ineffective against Omicron transmission in the rationale they gave for ending vaccine passes. Instead, they gave a very wishy-washy, and unhelpful answer about enough people being infected and enough people being boosted, neither of which had anything to do with the actual science. This was also almost certainly a political decision which would allow the culture war against unvaccinated to be continued by their surrogates.

**Related Questions:**

-Why did the govt need to have ANY waiting period to discontinue the use of vaccine passes. Was it as a final insult?

**Question: Was the govt willing to analyse how Omicron spread in New Zealand vs Australia and other nations and consider whether any general public restrictions were still effective with Omicron. If not, why not?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It was clear by February 2022 when comparing spread across many countries in Europe vs the level of public restrictions that none of the general public restrictions were effective at constraining spread. Keeping restrictions that were known or should have been known to be ineffective for political/control reasons would be a massive abuse of public trust.**

**Summary:**

By Feb 2022, comparisons across multiple countries showed the exact same level of Omicron spread, not being affected by restrictions at all, and having death rates differing by vaccination percentage. This is why restrictions were cut back or completely removed across multiple countries starting in late Feb - early March, 2022, and that included Australia. The govt should have used the removal of vaccination passes and the removal of almost all restrictions in public areas in Australia from March of 2022 as a trigger to reassess whether any restrictions should remain, and a comparison of per-capita cases and Omicron spread between Australia with much fewer restrictions and New Zealand would have shown no significant difference. It is difficult to see how the govt would have come to the conclusion to keep restrictions if any honest evaluation had been done about spread between the two countries.

**Related Questions:**

- Was the govt interested in using any comparative metrics between the two countries at this time?
- Was there any attempt to measure effectiveness vs restrictions?

## **Question: How did the govt ever expect the post-vaccine-pass Orange TLS setting to control community level Omicron spread?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**New Zealanders were kept in a highly cynical Orange TLS setting for almost half a year that couldn't have controlled community level spread even in theory. They suffered under completely politically-motivated restrictions long after the rest of the world had completely or almost completely ended all Covid restrictions.**

**Summary:**

Once the vaccine pass rules had been removed, the Orange setting mandated the use of masks in retail settings along with public transport and hospital settings, while not mandating the use of masks in restaurants, bars, or other event and hospitality venues. Back when vaccine passes were required, those differences in masking were justified by only vaccinated people being allowed in unmasked spaces, while everyone had to wear masks in spaces where vaccine passes were not required. Now that vaccine passes had been found to be completely ineffective via transmission and finally had been removed, there was no such justification, except for a political cynicism. Now masks were required in areas that highly Covid fearful people had to go to, such as supermarkets and other retail, and masks were not required in areas where people who did not fear Covid were likely to go, such as restaurants, bars and other entertainment and event venues, so both groups were somewhat politically satisfied, fearful people were happy that people had to mask up in the areas that they were going to go, while non fearful people were happy that there was a large number of public areas that didn't require masking.

Putting aside the numerous hospital masking studies that showed that anything other than a fit tested N95 mask replaced every few hours was almost completely ineffective to absolutely completely ineffective (the disposable blue surgical masks and the designer cloth masks had 0% effectiveness in many Omicron studies) against the spread of Omicron, It is clear even in theory that having a large swath of public venues with no masking being required next to retail venues where masking is required would not be able to reduce community level spread

of Covid. And yet that is the justification that the govt continued to use for month after month why Orange had to remain.

**Related Questions:**

-Were there any discussion papers describing how the govt thought this could possibly decrease the amount of spread?

-Was MOH being consulted about the level of restrictions they recommended? Did they agree with the Orange rules?

## **Question: Did the govt refuse to remove the TLS because of how it shaped restrictions of large organizations?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**People interacting or working within large organizations often had to deal with restrictions that were more severe than recommended by the TLS. Was this being tacitly and cynically approved by the govt by continuing the use of the TLS?**

### **Summary:**

Similar to how large organizations worked through the level system to understand how that would affect them in their day to day functioning, they did the same when the TLS was first unveiled. When the TLS was unveiled, NZ was still dealing with Delta, so the consequences of a Covid infection was more severe, and NZers still had the impression that we would only be in Orange for short periods while transitioning down from Red. Therefore, the measures that the organizations planned to take while in Orange were more severe than the general TLS would be under Omicron. Many organizations did not revise their internal recommendations for Omicron, and therefore people still found themselves subject to restrictions that had long since disappeared in the updated TLS, such as social distancing, or having food served while seated, or not engaging in activities that involved large numbers or optional gatherings such as company picnics, etc when in Orange. All of these policies were ineffective anachronisms by the winter of 2022, but through organizational inertia, they persisted until the TLS was finally removed. Was this a deliberate cynical ploy by the govt to continue the hysteria while having plausible deniability by pointing to the watered down restrictions in the official TLS?

### **Related Questions:**

- Did the govt make any backchannel effort or recommendation to have organizations update their policies to match the new Omicron realities?
- Did the govt notice that meant children had to deal with much more severe restrictions from risk-adverse organizations as compared to adults?

**Question: How much effort did the govt put into stopping mask exemption abuse? Did they believe the public thought there was any credible risk of prosecution of people who wrongly applied for a mask exemption?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**With no evidence requested for the exemption and no clear route for enforcing the abuse of said passes, this appeared to be yet another cynical “pressure release valve” for the govt. This allowed restrictions to stay longer because all of the weight was being applied to the normally compliant.**

**Summary:**

As someone who finally applied for a mask exemption as my ADHD was continually triggered by masking, after gathering the documentation for my condition, I was shocked to see that none of that was actually required, just a checkbox or two to give a very non-specific reason for the exemption, and a checkbox to declare that I did have a valid reason to apply for the exemption, and then the exemption documentation was clearly automatically generated and e-mailed within minutes. It made me feel like an absolute chump for having tried to persist with masking for months despite the effect it had on me. Surely it had that effect on many others.

The govt measures were now completely useless for containing spread or any other public health measure. They could now also be completely opted out of in terms of simply not testing to dodge mandatory isolation, and masking could be avoided by applying for the mask exemption. Yet they were still causing fear in the population, even though they were now effectively completely optional.

**Related Questions:**

- How many mask exemption applications had been investigated for possible misuse/application without grounds?
- How many people were referred for prosecution for misuse of a mask exemption?

-What was the official process for someone to end up being investigated and possibly prosecuted for the misuse of a mask exemption?

**Question: Did the govt understand/accept that it was extremely unlikely to the point of being practically impossible of there being a significantly more severe variant after widespread Omicron infection?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was a cynical political ploy that spread fear and justified continued vigilance and restrictions and stopped New Zealanders from moving on.**

**Summary:**

Once there was a mild variant that was easily spread among the population, and the population gained natural immunity from it, it was extremely unlikely that a variant that had more severe impacts on a carrier would ever be able to outcompete a mild variant with less severe impacts on a carrier. Instead, the evolutionary/adaptive pressure was more likely to create even milder variants, and that's what happened. That's been the pattern for EVERY pandemic, and it is almost as predictive as thermodynamics. Therefore, this was a very cynical ploy to suggest that active control and monitoring by the government would still be required when the current situation no longer justified it.

**Related Questions:**

-Did the govt at any time after the emergence of Omicron have any credible threat of a variant that would have more severe effects on the carrier?



**Question: How many plays of the Winter Illness animation in shopping malls did the govt pay for during June - August 2022?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Even after almost all places in the world had dropped most or all restrictions, the New Zealand govt was still provoking fear in the general population, and worse still, trying to move the fear away from just Covid.**

**Summary:**

The 15 or 30 second animations of a person masked up holding an umbrella while “the flu” or “Covid-19” rained down from above him played almost endlessly on advertising screens in shopping malls during the winter months. That animation must have played every 3 - 5 minutes in Westfield Riccarton, if not even more often. This, along with large restriction signs and QR codes, many of which no longer applied, created an unhealthy obsession about ‘health’, and that gloom certainly caused economic damage, if not psychological damage.

**Related Questions:**

-Was there ANY discussion in the govt about the tradeoff between creating a climate of fear to gain compliance vs the effects on businesses and hospitality?

**Question: Did the MOH vet the claim in the Masks Matter campaign which was an absolute lie - that masks help prevent transmission of the Flu?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**When the New Zealand public finally went into open rebellion against masking, the govt finally directly told the bold-face lie that it had previously only been implying about masks and flu. It is very bad if the govt had finally managed to corrupt the MOH into approving a bold faced lie.**

**Summary:**

At the end of July, the govt announced that the latest Omicron wave had ended, but they still weren't going to re-evaluate restrictions until the spring had arrived. This was the final straw for many New Zealanders, and there was a visible rebellion against mask wearing in the first few weeks in August, Westfield Riccarton going from ~80-90% of mask wearing down to ~50% in one week, then ~30% the next week. This was obvious non-compliance that couldn't be explained by mask exemptions, and in response, the govt said it was going to start a new advertising campaign that "Masks Matter". When that campaign was unveiled, the govt finally directly told the bold-faced lie that Flu transmission could be controlled by masks. That was an obvious lie, there had been many studies over decades and none found any significant control of flu by masks compared to the drawbacks, and that very subject had in fact been covered by Australian media immediately before the pandemic:

<https://theconversation.com/can-surgical-masks-protect-you-from-getting-the-flu-125023>

Therefore, it is important to understand what level of vetting and influence the MOH had in the campaign, because the govt being able to corrupt the MOH to approve the spread of an obvious lie is a dire consequence indeed.

**Related Questions:**

-Was the MOH asked to come up with a series of messages and they were passed to the people creating the graphics? Or what was the process of consultation with the MOH for these series of ads?

-Given the series of hospital-based studies showing the contrary, what evidence did MOH have at the time that masks actually mattered when it came to community wide spread? Or were their recommendations completely about reducing personal risk?

**Question: How did the govt justify continuing mandatory isolation for Covid + people when that was removed for Australia in October 2022, because the level of asymptomatic spread made mandatory isolation for Covid + people pointless and ineffective at reducing spread?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was yet another case of New Zealand now having more restrictions than most of the rest of the world. The govt needed to have a very good justification to keep it that way.**

**Summary:**

At the same time the other differences between Omicron and previous variants of Covid were being discovered by the rest of the world, it became clear that mandatory isolation/quarantine of people testing Omicron+ was no longer effective in stopping spread, because the proportion of people with Omicron who had severe symptoms or in fact any symptoms was much lower than other variants, so keeping people home that knowingly had Omicron had little or no effect due to the much larger proportion of people who were unknowingly Omicron+. Again, this is an evolutionary adaptation that is expected as a virus goes from being novel to being endemic. Unlike the other discoveries made about Omicron, it took longer for the rest of the world to accept that isolating Omicron+ cases no longer had any constructive effect. This was almost certainly political, isolation of Omicron+ cases was the clearest method for govt to show that it was doing "something". But eventually almost all countries accepted reality and dropped mandatory isolation of Omicron+, including Australia in October of 2022.

This should have triggered New Zealand to re-evaluate its own restrictions and see if they were still constructive. As it appears, the govt believed that it "knew better" than most of the other countries about these restrictions.

**Related Questions:**

-Would the govt have considered dropping mandatory isolation when removing the TLS if Australia had done so before the September announcement?

- How often was the NZ govt actually re-evaluating its remaining restrictions? Had it been left rudderless because of the impending resignation of Ardern?
- Did the govt recognize that there were real costs to continuing the mandatory isolation requirement, even though most people could opt-out from it by simply not testing for Omicron?
- How much compliance did the govt believe there was with testing and mandatory isolation, especially with the overt rebellion that it had seen among the public in August of 2022?

**Question: How could the govt have believed a study in 2023 about mandatory isolation that contradicted the results in all known countries was credible? Why did the media accept it?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**This was the last of the hysterical studies released to media by the govt. It was clearly trying to provide rationale for continuing mandatory isolation. Once again, it increased fear levels and stopped the now smaller subset of fearful New Zealanders from moving on. It showed the media was still willing to accept outlandish claims about Covid from the govt without question.**

**Summary:**

The 'study' released in March 2023 about the possible effects of ending mandatory isolation made predictions that had not been seen in the results in ANY country that had ended mandatory isolation. Not one country had seen any significant increase in Omicron spread or any significant increase in Omicron hospitalizations compared to countries who hadn't ended the policy, or in results before vs after the policy had ended that were unrelated to another variant entering the country. Therefore, this 'study' was easily refuted if any organization in govt or especially the media wanted to vet the conclusions. None were apparently willing to do so.

**Related Questions:**

- Why did the govt commission the study in the first place?
- Did any department within the govt do any checking of the predictions vs the actual results in countless countries?
- Did any media outlet do any checking of the predictions vs the actual results in countless countries?

**Question: Did the govt understand how the mandatory isolation policy now put specific sectors in New Zealand at risk and made those sectors uncompetitive with the rest of the world who had dropped this requirement completely or exempted those specific sectors from the policy?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The performing arts and events sector had already suffered for several years under inflexible restrictions vs those in Australia and other countries, and keeping a policy that had been dropped by almost every other area in the world was potentially the last straw for many businesses.**

**Summary:**

The mandatory isolation policy was a high risk for New Zealand productions, due to their short term nature and tight venue schedules because of the scale of audiences and venues around New Zealand. If an Omicron infection spread among large numbers of the cast or irreplaceable principals, then the production had to be completely cancelled, with low probabilities of finding a time to reschedule. These risks had been accepted around the world in 2021 and 2022 because organizations were desperate to resume performances. However making only New Zealand organizations continue to deal with this risk in 2023 was greatly unfair and uncompetitive. The expected pay of many performers coming from overseas was put at risk and made them seriously reconsider.

It was extremely unlikely that this policy made ANY difference to the risk of Omicron spread. The endemic nature of Omicron by this point meant it was very likely that there would be several asymptomatic Omicron + audience members attending any performance. Also, the endemic nature of Omicron meant that a great proportion of the audience would have immunity to Omicron and it would not cause any greater risk of spread than any other public location. The superspreading risk had long since passed.

The report released in March of 2023 and the lack of understanding of how continuing these requirements while the rest of the world, including Australia, had

dropped them would seriously damage the performing arts community suggests that zealots were now driving the response.

**Related Questions:**

-Did the NZ Govt investigate how their restrictions and lack of predictability of said restrictions had disproportionately hurt the performing art sector in New Zealand compared to places like Australia who had worked at creating much more predictable and flexibility around their restrictions?

-Did the govt consider that Australia dropping those restrictions in 2022 and the easy movement between those two counties might cause an exodus of performers to Australia?

-Had there been any reconsideration around the Covid response when the PM changed, especially around how the rest of the world was now treating Covid in 2023?

-Was there any reconsideration done after the WHO ended its public emergency?

-Was there any reconsideration done after the USA ended its public emergency?

-Was the govt focus grouping/polling the removal of the final covid restrictions?

-Did the govt give any formal public health explanation about why the final restrictions were removed on August 15th, 2023, or as suspected, was it purely political due to the election campaign?



**Question: How can we ensure that wide restrictions on freedom and mobility are only used when absolutely necessary for avoiding a civil emergency and/or the collapse of the state and/or law and order in future responses?**

**Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**The “precautionary principle” was greatly misunderstood and misused in the response, perhaps deliberately so. It means that public health officials should be cautious about taking ANY drastic steps before gaining a good balanced understanding of the effects, NOT that they should take immediate precautions against any spread of a given disease.**

**Summary:**

It appears obvious now that there needs to be some kind of law changes that constrains the ability of partisan bodies to make a “captain’s call” about putting wide-ranging restrictions in force. It’s clear there needs to be some kind of “hysteria circuit breaker”. The next suggestion about an cross-party body controlling restrictions may be sufficient, but more investigation may be necessary.

## **Question: Should any future pandemic response be controlled by a panel of ALL parties that are in govt?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**It seems almost undeniable that the govt response to Covid became more and more tied to political considerations and much less around public health as time went on, and that had horrific consequences for the effectiveness of the response. Having a cross-party panel that was required to have supermajority approval of members for all actions taken would greatly reduce the risk of political capture in the future.**

### **Summary:**

The Labour party and surrogates continued to suggest that the Labour party should receive all the credit for pandemic response successes, and that the opposition party would have allowed Covid to enter and spread uncontrolled and cause massive number of deaths. This is almost certainly untrue because the opposition parties were constantly asking for MOH recommendations, and only MOH recommendations to be implemented. They were hamstrung by the lack of sharing of internal data from the MOH and decision rationale from the cabinet.

It is probable that had there been a cross-party panel making decisions only about the pandemic response, then the early MOH recommendation to close the borders immediately wouldn't have been ignored, that the govt would have kept to the actual level criteria, that vaccination would have occurred at a much faster rate, that the extremely questionable decision to not require pre-departure testing from red-zone flights from NSW wouldn't have occurred, that the MOH recommendation of very limited vax passes would have been accepted, that MIQ would have ended very shortly after recommended by the MOH, and restrictions would have ended soon afterwards, at least when Australia dropped their restrictions. All of that would have been likely with a cross-party response because there would be immediate transparency and accountability if MOH recommendations were not being followed, there'd be no incentive for the govt to try to gain political capital from the response if all parties were involved, and there'd be LESS incentive for the govt to make the response last longer than necessary or gain power over the population because this would be an aspect of

the govt that the ruling parties in govt could NOT take credit for. They'd have to gain political capital from other activities in govt besides the pandemic response.

**Related Questions:**

-Are there laws or other situations listed where a cross-party panel is called to adjudicate?

## **Question: How can a future pandemic response effectively focus on a swift return to normality?**

### **Lesson to be learned/why it is important:**

**Despite New Zealanders being one of the least impacted countries by the actual illness, we ended up being one of the most fearful countries, and that greatly hurt the economy and our mental health.**

### **Summary:**

It is important that any future response makes an effort to combat hysteria about the illness and makes it clear that we will head back to normal, and not a “new normal” either. The narratives around this pandemic were hijacked by people who thought that hysteria would allow them to push their own agenda, whereas Covid followed the same path as all previous pandemics, and just like all previous pandemics, it became mild and endemic. It’s important that we guard against those people trying to hijack any future responses for their own purposes, and keep it focused exclusively on absolutely proven public health benefits.

### **Related Questions:**

-Do any of the Level documents or pandemic response discussion documents prepared well before Covid talk about the most effective process of returning to normality? Or was this taken for granted?