



Commonwealth Government Covid-19 Response Inquiry terms of reference

The purpose of the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry (the Inquiry) is to identify lessons learned to improve Australia's preparedness for future pandemics.

Scope

The Inquiry will review the Commonwealth Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and make recommendations to improve response measures in the event of future pandemics. It will consider opportunities for systems to more effectively anticipate, adapt and respond to pandemics in areas of Commonwealth Government responsibility.

The Inquiry will adopt a whole-of-government view in recognition of the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 across portfolios and the community. Specific areas of review may include, but are not limited to:

- Governance including the role of the Commonwealth Government, responsibilities of state and territory governments, national governance mechanisms (such as National Cabinet, the National Coordination Mechanism and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee) and advisory bodies supporting responses to COVID-19.
- Key health response measures (for example across COVID-19 vaccinations and treatments, key medical supplies such as personal protective equipment, quarantine facilities, and public health messaging).
- Broader health supports for people impacted by COVID-19 and/or lockdowns (for example mental health and suicide prevention supports, and access to screening and other preventive health measures).
- International policies to support Australians at home and abroad (including with regard to international border closures, and securing vaccine supply deals with international partners for domestic use in Australia).
- Support for industry and businesses (for example responding to supply chain and transport issues, addressing labour shortages, and support for specific industries).
- Financial support for individuals (including income support payments).

- Community supports (across early childhood education and care, higher education, housing and homelessness measures, family and domestic violence measures in areas of Commonwealth Government responsibility).
- Mechanisms to better target future responses to the needs of particular populations (including across genders, age groups, socio-economic status, geographic location, people with disability, First Nations peoples and communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities).

The Inquiry will consider the findings of previous relevant inquiries and reviews and identify knowledge gaps for further investigation. It will also consider the global experience and lessons learnt from other countries in order to improve response measures in the event of future global pandemics.

The following areas are not in scope for the Inquiry:

- Actions taken unilaterally by state and territory governments.
- International programs and activities assisting foreign countries.

Independent Panel

The Prime Minister has appointed an Independent Panel of three eminent people to conduct the Inquiry. The Independent Panel will consult with relevant experts and people with a diverse range of backgrounds and lived experience.

Taskforce

A Taskforce within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will support the Independent Panel.

Public consultation

Public consultation will be completed during the Inquiry on the substance of the issues outlined in the Terms of Reference. The Independent Panel may invite and publish submissions and seek information from any persons or bodies. Consultation will take place across Australia with:

- Key community and other stakeholders reflecting a diversity of backgrounds
- Experts
- Commonwealth Government and state and territory government agencies
- Members of the public

Final Report

The Independent Panel will deliver a Final Report to Government including recommendations to the Commonwealth Government to improve Australia's preparedness for future pandemics by the end of September 2024.