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Pānui Pāho

Speakers  
Whakarārangatanga

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Go to

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[View all Ministers](#)

Go to

- Portfolio -

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9 MARCH 2021

# Independent group to oversee continual improvement in COVID-19 response



HON CHRIS HIPKINS

COVID-19 Response

A newly established advisory group will ensure New Zealand's COVID-19 response continues to

learn and adapt with a focus on continual improvement, COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins says.

"Throughout our response to the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19 we have been committed to continual improvement, and independent advice has been a really important part of that process," Chris Hipkins said.

"Independent reviews of our contact tracing systems and the implementation of our testing strategy provided useful advice and recommendations. Implementation of those recommendations has left us better protected and better prepared.

"This new advisory group will formalise that ongoing approach to independent review and improvement. As well as continually monitoring the implementation of previous reviews, the group will be empowered to provide impartial advice on the performance and impact of the whole system and the strategic direction of the response.

"It will also provide assurances on the performance and settings of managed isolation and quarantine facilities, and on planning for an outbreak, and will review public communications and responses in the community.

"The establishment of this group builds on other recent changes such as our work before Christmas to reorganise how government agencies operationalising the Elimination Strategy work together to generate stronger alignment between border and health systems. That's worked well.

"Today, I can confirm the new group's formation, make-up and terms of reference. It will start work next Monday, 15 March, with a term through to 1 June, 2022.

"The group will be chaired by Sir Brian Roche, and is made up of the following members:

- Rob Fyfe,
- Dr Debbie Ryan,
- Professor Phillip Hill, and
- Dr Dale Bramley.

"This is a group of highly respected and experienced experts, with strong connections across a number of fields.

"Sir Brian has extensive governance, leadership and business experience; Mr Fyfe brings a senior business leadership focus; Dr Ryan has decades of public health service with a focus on Pacific Health; Professor Hill is an epidemiologist with expertise in infectious diseases and research, and; Dr Bramley brings broad public health and governance experience, along with a Māori health



perspective.

"I'm pleased with the make-up of the group and thank the members for agreeing to provide their expertise, as the Government continues to learn and sharpen its response as we enter the second year of COVID-19," Chris Hipkins said.

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