

25 November 2024

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General, World Health Organisation  
Avenue Appia 20  
1211 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,

***COVID-19 Nation Dates: A New Zealand timeline of significant events during the COVID-19 pandemic***

Thank you for your ongoing work on pandemic management.

The McGuinness Institute is a think tank based in Wellington, New Zealand. Our aim is to explore New Zealand's long term future. As early as 2004, we started researching the impact of a pandemic.

Please find attached our latest work, a book titled: *COVID-19 Nation Dates: A New Zealand timeline of significant events during the COVID-19 pandemic* (enclosed). The *Nation Dates* book series aims to provide the public with a record of our past in an accessible, well-referenced format (learn more at [nationdatesnz.org](http://nationdatesnz.org)).

*COVID-19 Nation Dates* has been a very substantial piece of work. The Institute's research into COVID-19 in New Zealand has been ongoing since the pandemic began, with our small team collating media articles, investigating press releases, undertaking interviews, contacting academics and epidemiologists, meeting with public servants and submitting OIA requests to different government organisations. The more we tried to find non-partisan records of the history of this time, the more we realised there was a lack of accessible, unbiased information on what happened in New Zealand. Online sources and media were constantly changing, so this book attempts to paint a solid picture of a very liquid narrative. The actions New Zealand undertook early on in the pandemic were quite different from those of most other countries, so you might be interested to read more about them. We enclose a complimentary copy.

*COVID-19 Nation Dates* aims to help the reader gain insights into pandemic management by recording the impacts of COVID-19 on our country between January 2020 and September 2024. This was a unique, intense time, with many significant public policy decisions made under immense pressure. As public policy enthusiasts, we observed how agile the decision-makers were, often relying on incomplete information, and we wondered who was recording these decisions and their implications. As the pandemic progressed, we were disappointed that, despite the huge impacts on public life, events were not always well documented. This book attempts to create a well-referenced, accessible record of what happened over this time. The objective is to help us consider the past critically so we can improve our policies for the future.

**Recommendations**

We recognise that the New Zealand Government and officials are currently undertaking work to help New Zealand become pandemic-ready (see list on page 17 of the book), however we do not believe this task is being treated with the necessary urgency or Parliamentary oversight. This point was reemphasised by the Auditor-General in his letter to the Health Select Committee on 1 November 2024. To this end, we have attached a table that lists our recommendations for consideration by Parliament. They are separated into the three pillars of public policy: institutions, instruments and information.

COVID-19 pandemic illustrated that pandemics are not just a health issue but require a whole-of-society response. For this reason, we suggest a separate select committee should be established to provide the necessary Parliamentary oversight.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,

Wendy McGuinness  
Chief Executive