Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

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Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor Workshop

Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

Connecting Researchers and Policymakers

Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara | Wellington
18 September 2023

Agenda

1:40pm	Registration
2:00pm	Mihi whakatau
2:05pm	Welcome and scene setting *Juliet Gerrard and Tracey McIntosh*
2:10pm	*Gary Evans*
2.15pm	Session 1: *George Slim,* Pressures facing the policy analyst trying to connect to researchers *Juliet Gerrard,* Research connections to policy
2:45pm	Session 2: *Gill Jolly, Gary Evans and Emily Parker*, Hīkina Whakatutuki | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, Building the science base in Aotearoa New Zealand
3.00pm	*Break*
3.15pm	Session 3: Panel discussion led by CSAs with a focus on learning from case studies
5:00pm	Session 4: Speed dating and networking with drinks and nibbles – with thanks to the Australasian Research Managers Society
6.30pm	Close

ARMS

Haere mai
Welcome
Scene setting,
Juliet Gerrard,
Tracey McIntosh
Who is, and isn’t in the room?

VISION for the role

a trusted, accessible bridge between scientists, society and government

PRINCIPLES*

Rigorous, **Inclusive**, Transparent, Accessible

*Nature, June 2018 : Four principles to make evidence synthesis more useful for policy

Session 1

George Slim

Pressures facing the policy analyst trying to connect to researchers

Juliet Gerrard

Research connections in policy

Pressures facing the policy analyst trying to connect to researchers

George Slim
Senior Advisor
Office of Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor,
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

Universities New Zealand and DPMC project on knowledge sharing between academics and policymakers

Enablers

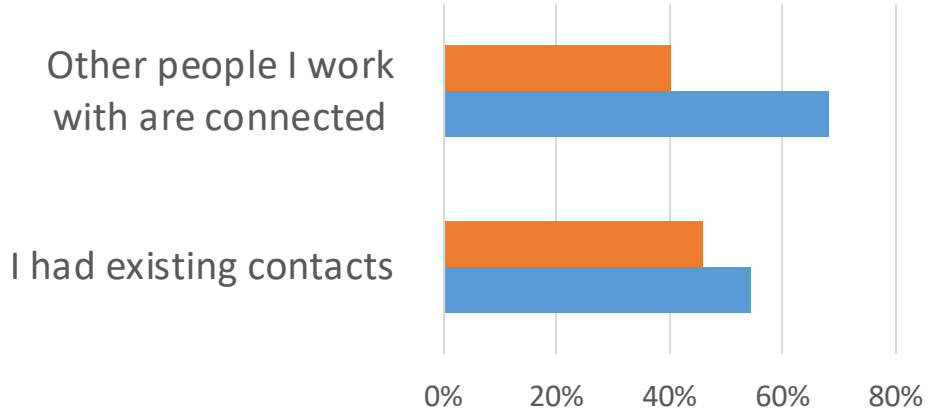
- Relationships
- Chief Science Advisors
- Conferences and other forms of knowledge exchange
- Collaborative initiatives
- Movement of staff
- Key research databases

Barriers

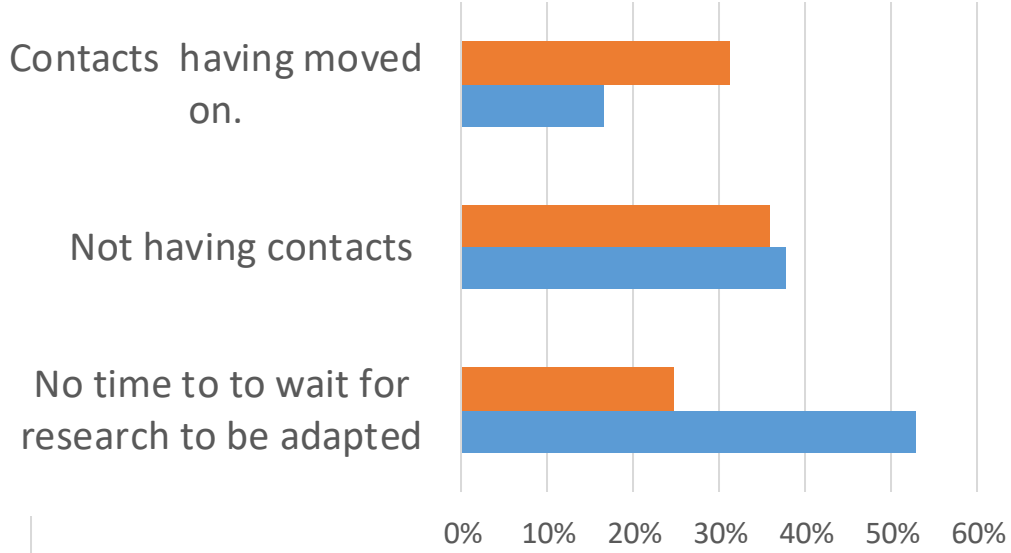
- Ways of working are not aligned
- Poor connections
- Lack of incentives
- Gaps in capacity
- Gaps in relevant research
- Commercial arrangements

OPMCSA email survey on connections

Enablers



Barriers



What would help?

Academics

Policy makers

People said:

Researchers need to be independent, and at arms'-length from political pressures

People I know have connections

Having policy-makers trained in how to connect to researchers

Who are the policy makers and how even would one connect with them?

I think policymakers are constrained and, despite the best of will, are often unable to adopt recommendations.

Senior policy managers who do not value evidence or research, but instead prioritise "good policy advice".

I think the answer is "I can find sufficiently good information without connecting to researchers, and I don't know who I should approach for more detail on particular questions when I can't find information"

Researchers not focusing on the key information gaps

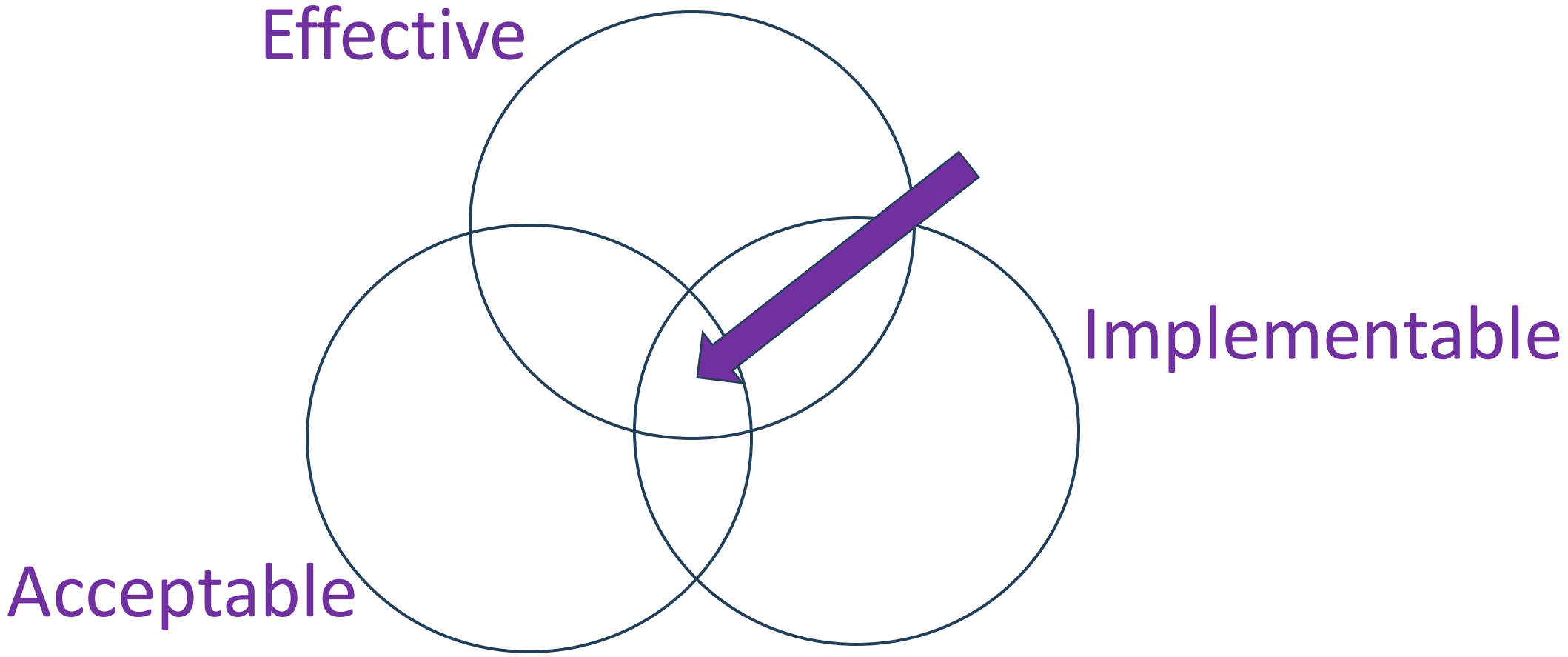
I am an ECR, having just completed my PhD. I have this week reached out to a policymaker

Policy makers not being open to something that did not fit their ideas of evidence

I do not believe they would take any notice

We develop relationships with academics and keep them informed of policy interest.

Good Policy



Resources:
DPMC Policy Project
Cate Roy's project on policy connections
Hannah McKerchar's resources forgetting started

Researchers connecting to policy

Juliet Gerrard

Office of Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor,
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

Providing science advice into policy

- **Science is never the only advice**
- Science is good at defining the problem
- Science is good at identifying options
- Science struggles with definitive timely answers
- Politicians have to make decisions in defined timeframes
- Policy makers have to implement those decisions

- Presenting the “facts” rarely changed anyone’s mind
- Science debate should not be a proxy for values debate

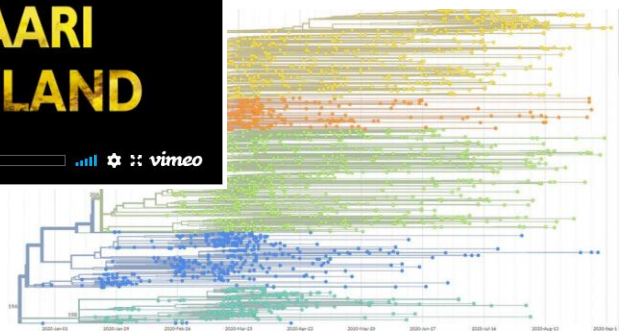
The most effective science advice is delivered just ahead of the policy agenda

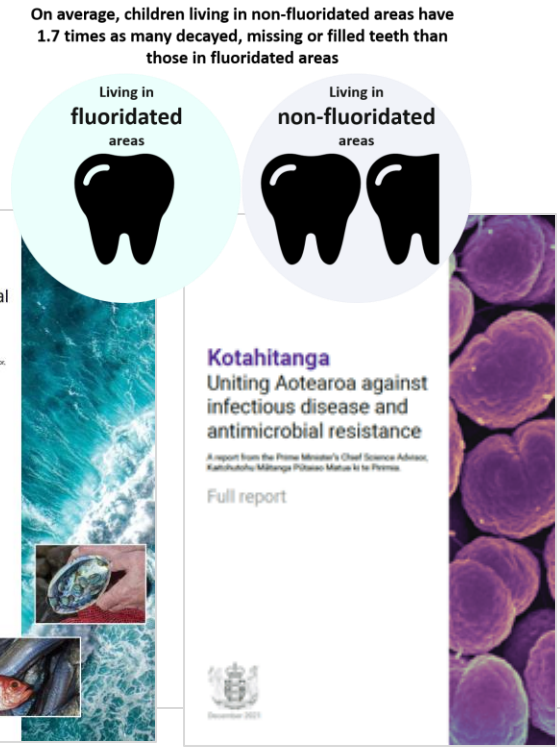
COVID-19

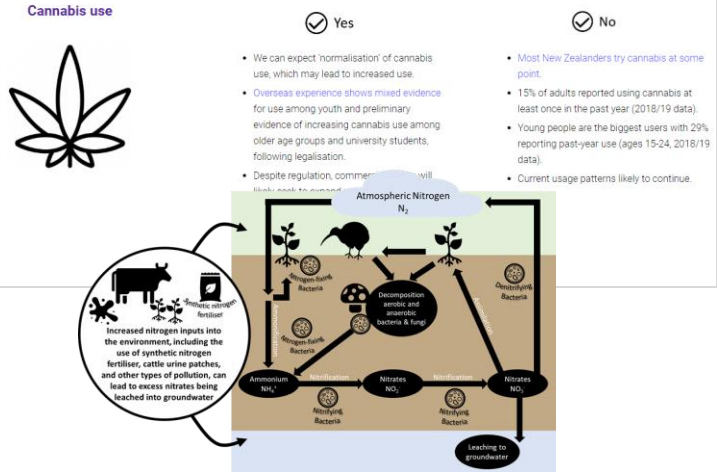
Advisory information provided to the Prime Minister as part of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

October 2021: The PM requested that Juliet and Ian Town convene an expert group to provide feedback on an earlier iteration of the traffic light system for COVID-19 protection once vaccination targets are reached. The final system is significantly strengthened compared to the consultation draft which was shared with the group. You can read the feedback provided under urgency here (PDF, 309KB)

- Download the July – September 2021 advice bundle (PDF, 3MB)
- Download the December 2020 – June 2021 advice bundle (PDF, 410KB)
- Download the September/October/November advice bundle (PDF, 2MB)
- Download the June/July/August 2020 advice bundle (PDF, 4MB)
- Download the May 2020 advice bundle (PDF, 693KB)
- Download the April 2020 advice bundle (PDF, 6MB)
- Read the March 2020 advice bundle (PDF, 611KB)



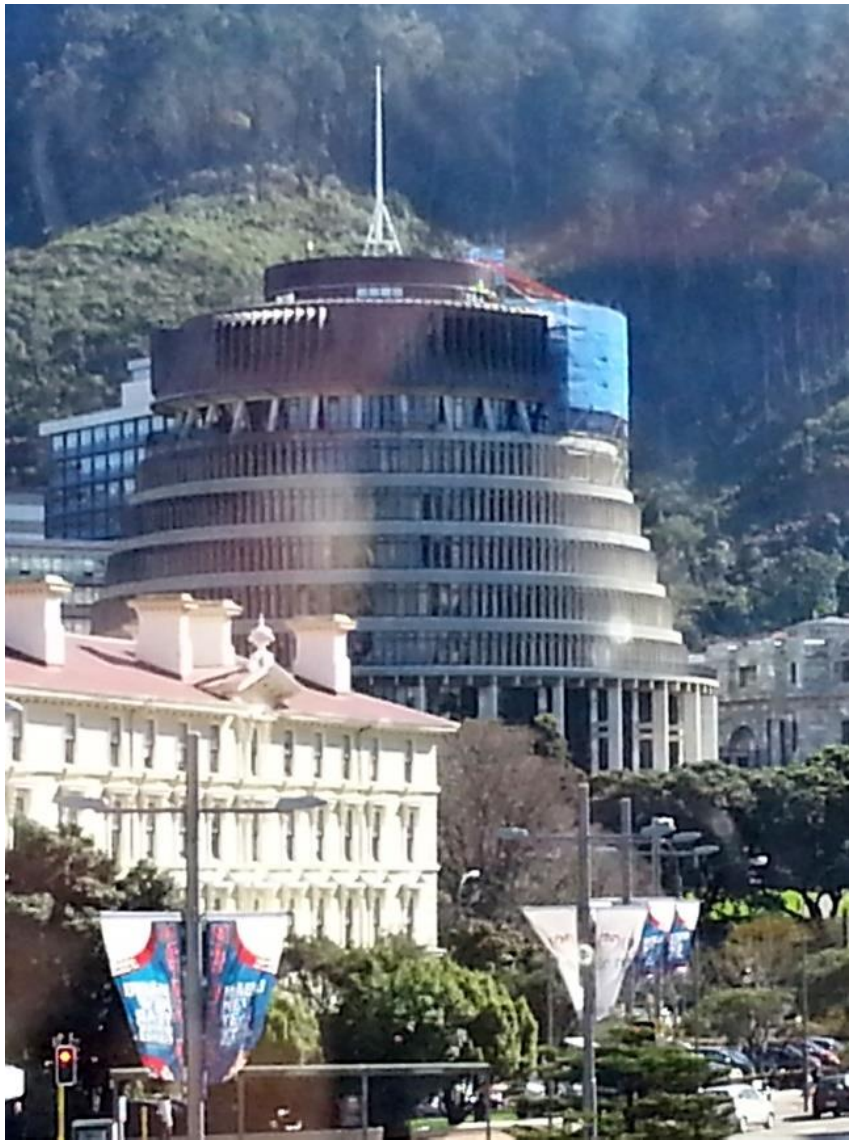




Effective science advice includes …

- **Research other than your own**
- A broad understanding of the government context
- A detailed appreciation of who in particular would value your advice

- A broad understanding of the stakeholder landscape
- A broad understanding of what other countries do in your area at the research-policy interface



CSAs can help

Ngā mihi nui

Questions?

Session 2

Gill Jolly, Gary Evans and Emily Parker

Building the science base in Aotearoa New Zealand

Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment
Hīkina Whakatutuki

Session 3

Mike Bunce, Shane Geange, Sam Thomas and Ewan Delany

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Ian Town, Steve Waldegrave and Michael Plank

Ministry of Health
Manatū Hauora

University of Canterbury
Te Whara Wānanga o Waitaha

Insights from working on COVID-19 Policy and Strategy

Steve Waldegrave
Associate DDG Strategy, Policy and Legislation

Draft in confidence
Not a Statement of Government Policy

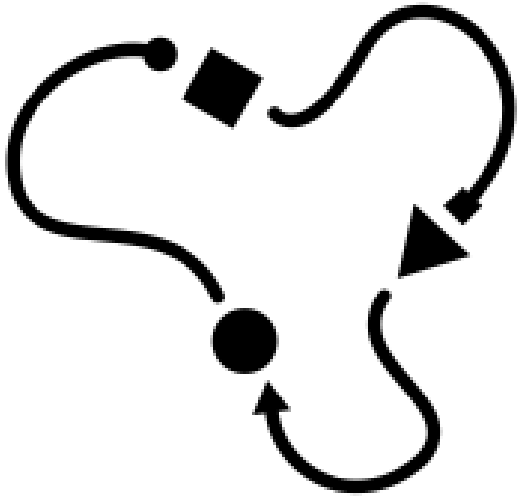
Context

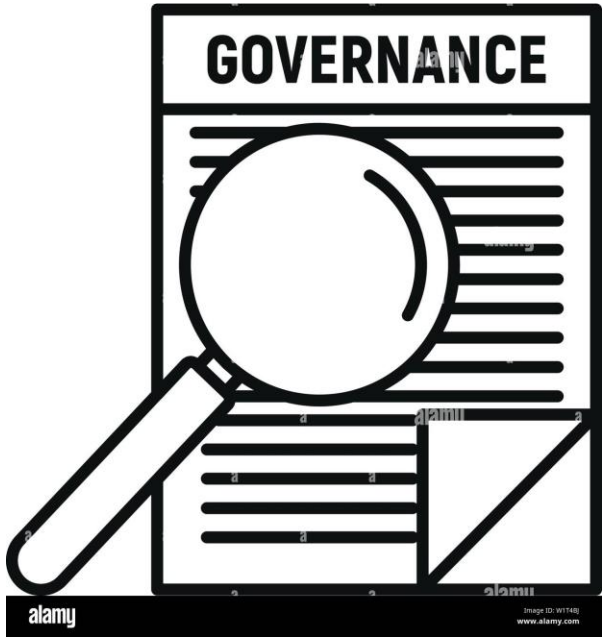
- Biggest global threat to health since WWII
- Virus that was spreading fast initially, then kept mutating - uncertainty
- Interventions that helped limit spread / severity of COVID-19 also had significant down-sides – e.g. impacts on freedoms, impacts on households' ability to work, impacts on global economy…
- Constant scrutiny (good but not always constructive)
- Social license changed over time – low to start, high in early days, hard later.
- Always had to trade off interests of different groups – no single solution suits all

Draft in confidence
Not a Statement of Government Policy

The experience of COVID-19 policy in Manatū Hauora

Challenges



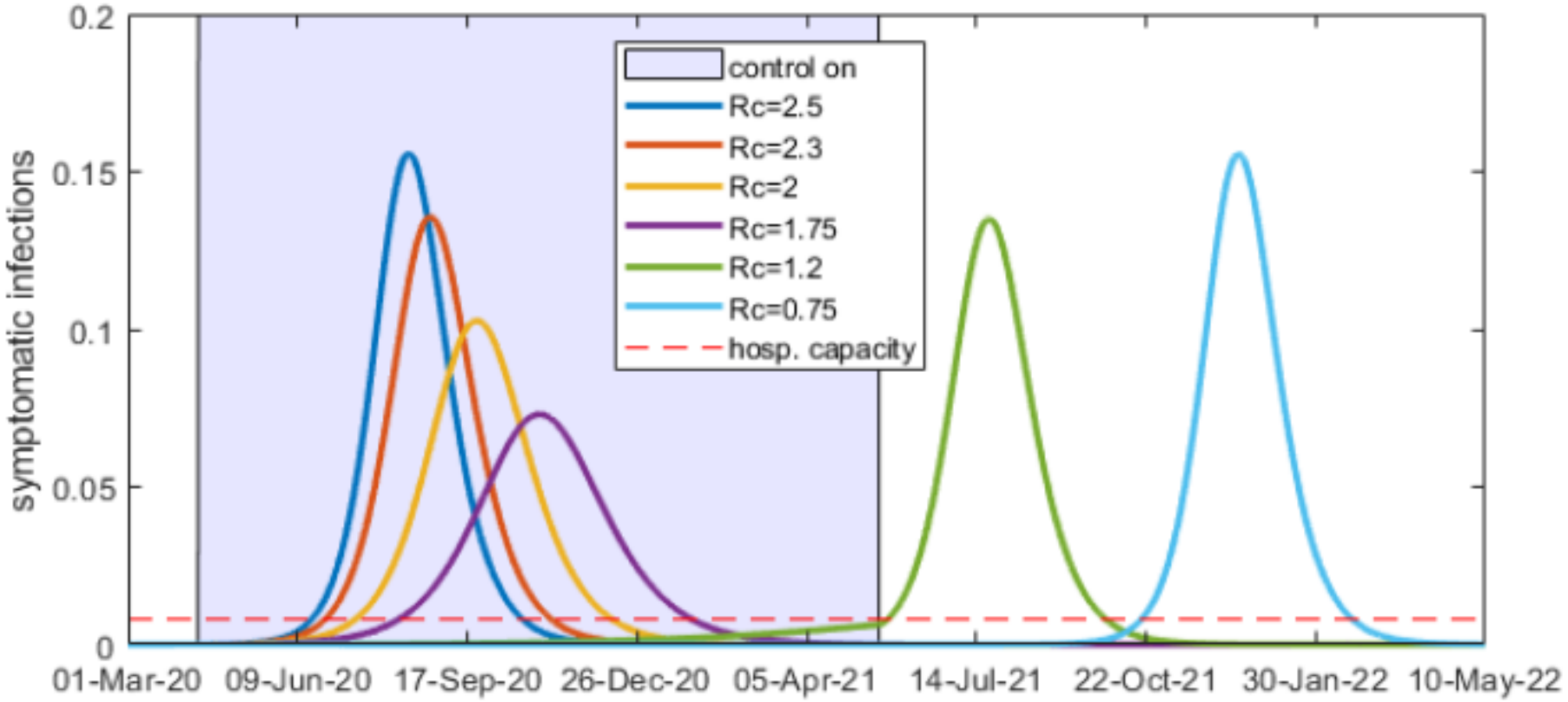


The role of mathematical modelling in supporting the Covid-19 response

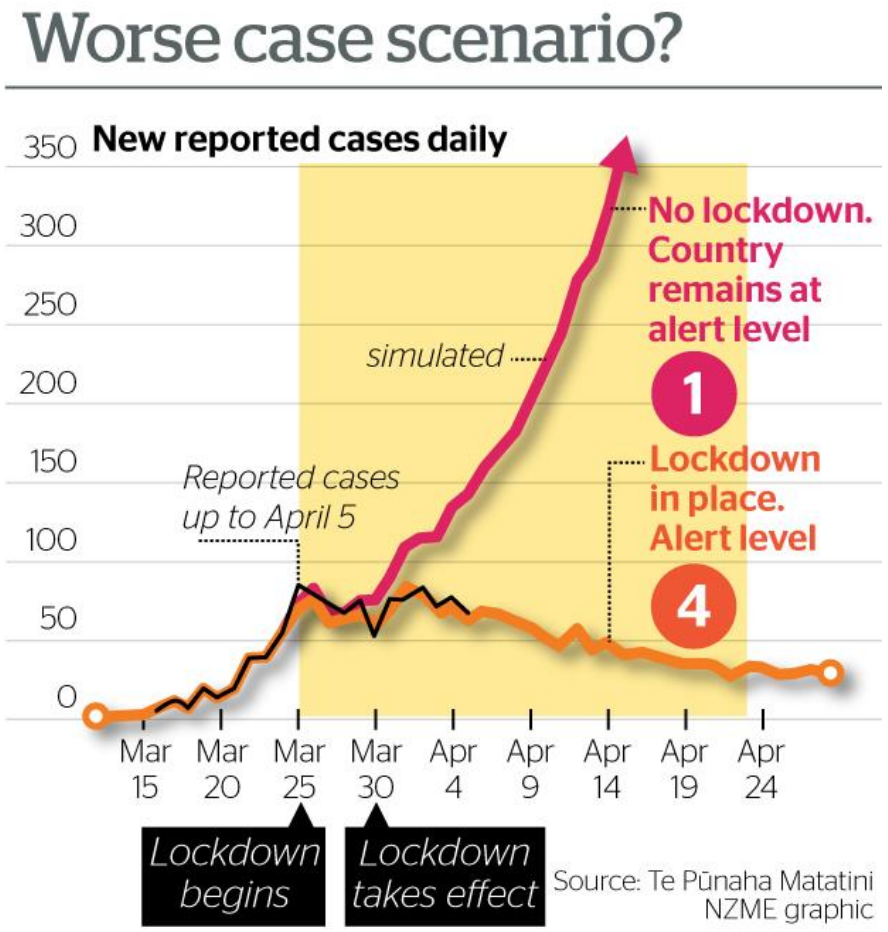
Professor Michael Plank

The scale of what we're facing

Heathcare system overwhelmed many times over unless there is decisive action to reduce transmission



Elimination



Specific case scenario report

11 August 2020

- The expected number of exposed individuals at this point is **29 (interquartile range [12, 40]).**

Highlighting inequities

Estimated inequities in COVID-19 infection fatality rates by ethnicity for Aotearoa New Zealand

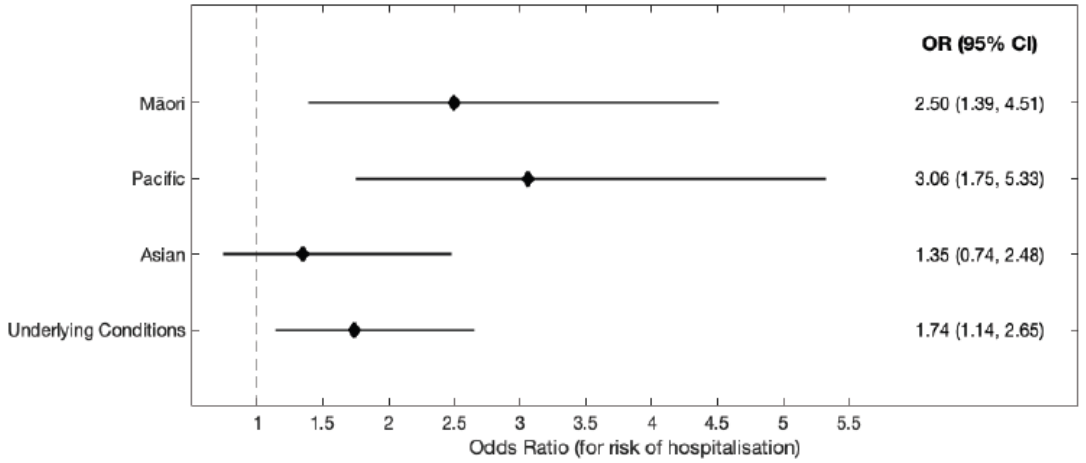
Nicholas Steyn, Rachelle N Binny, Kate Hannah, Shaun C Hendy, Alex James, Tahu Kukutai, Audrey Lustig, Melissa McLeod, Michael J Plank, Kannan Ridings, Andrew Sporle

medRχiv
THE PREPRINT SERVER FOR HEALTH SCIENCES

Posted April 24, 2020.

Māori and Pacific people in New Zealand have a higher risk of hospitalisation for COVID-19

Nicholas Steyn, Rachelle N Binny, Kate Hannah, Shaun C Hendy, Alex James, Audrey Lustig, Kannan Ridings, Michael J Plank, Andrew Sporle



Strategy and policy decision support

Exit from elimination going to be bumpy!

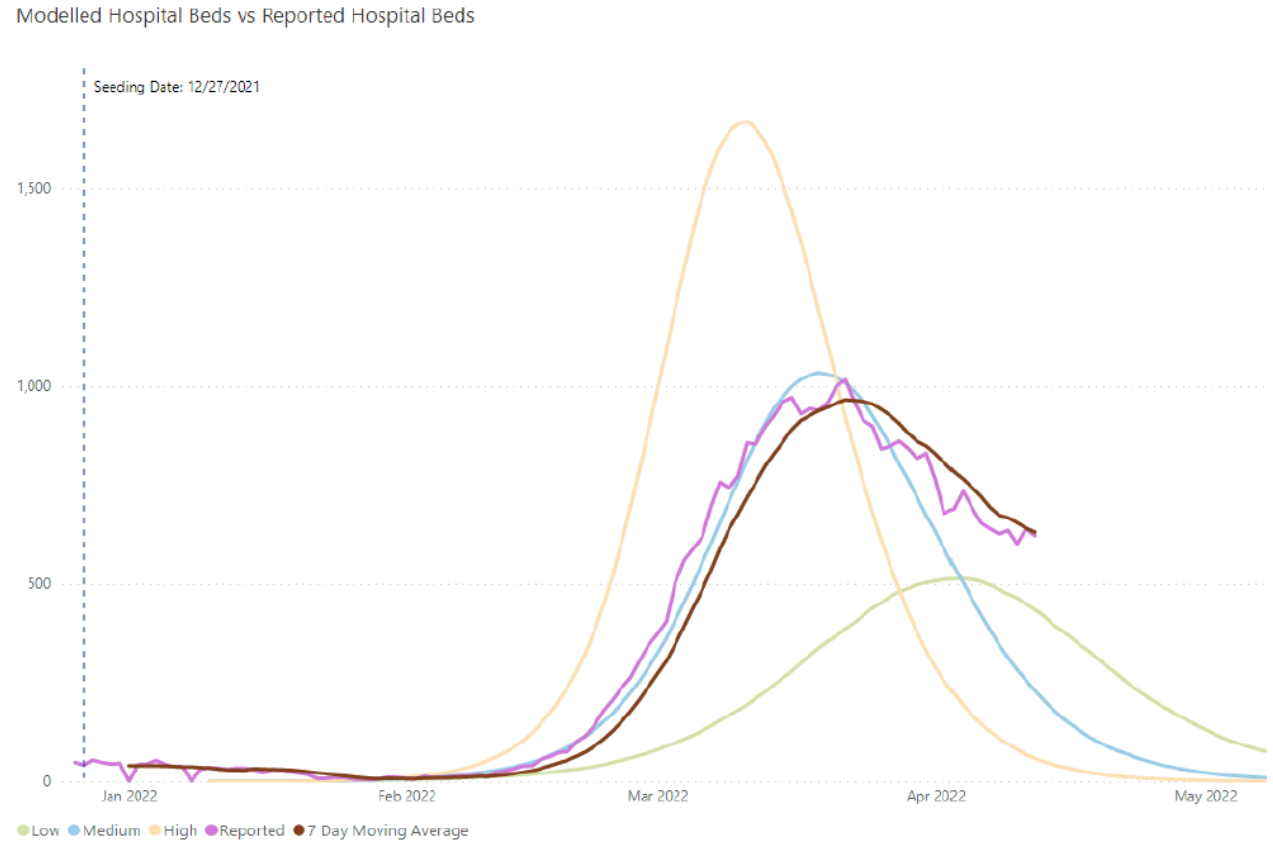
- Unlikely to reach herd immunity through vaccination alone
- Combination of other PH and border measures needed

Comparing outcomes under different policy options

- Change to Alert Level or Traffic Light settings
- Changes to isolation policy
- Different border restrictions

Situational awareness and planning

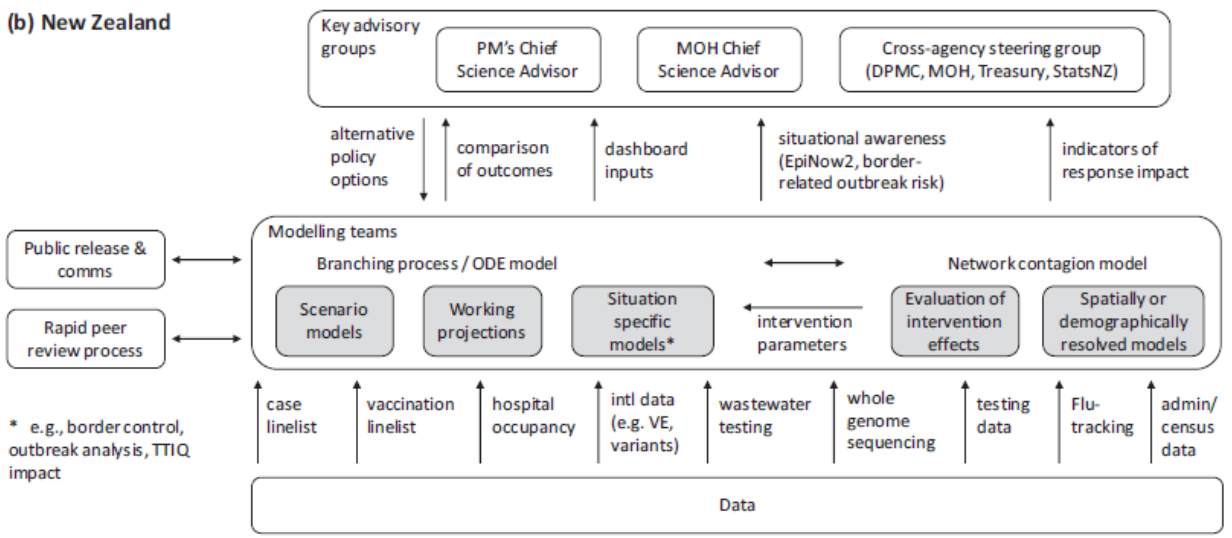
Integrating multiple data streams with epidemiological models in real time to provide scenarios for situational awareness and planning

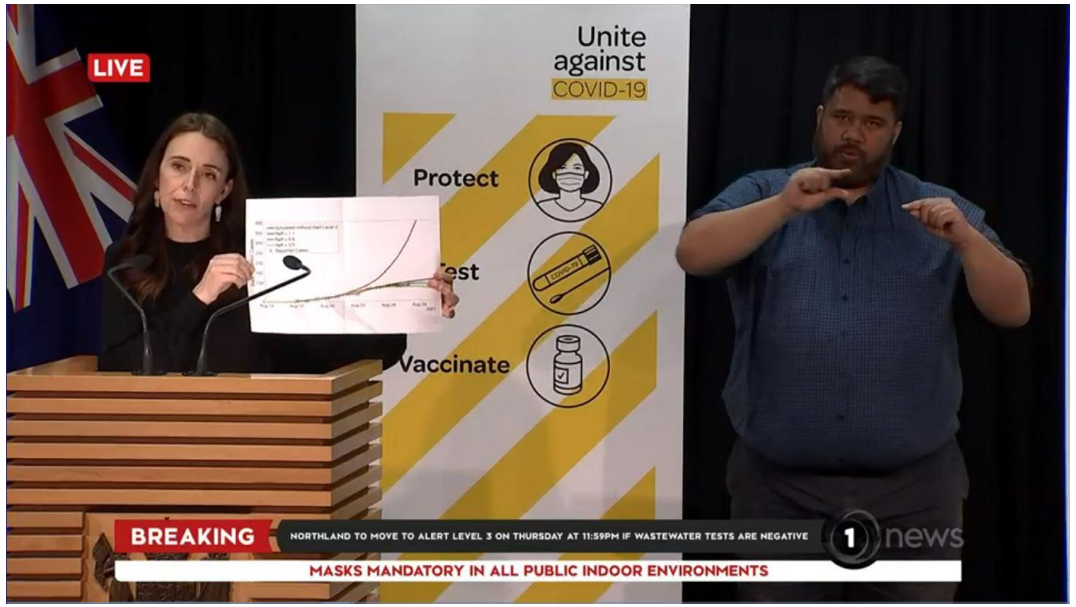


Sources: TAS, based on COVID-19 Modelling Aotearoa Branching Process Model 27 February 2022, and DHB reports to TAS of daily hospital occupancy (all COVID-19 positive people admitted as inpatients) as of 13:00 13 April 2022.

Comms and media

- Commissioning via regular two-way dialogue with govt steering group
- Results released publicly (>80 public reports & journal articles) and supporting media
- Stressful working to tight deadlines under intense media scrutiny…
  …but important for transparency and public buy-in (not the case in other countries)
- Walking a tightrope to communicate results of our work without undermining or appearing to dictate PH response
- More challenging over time as trade offs became more nuanced





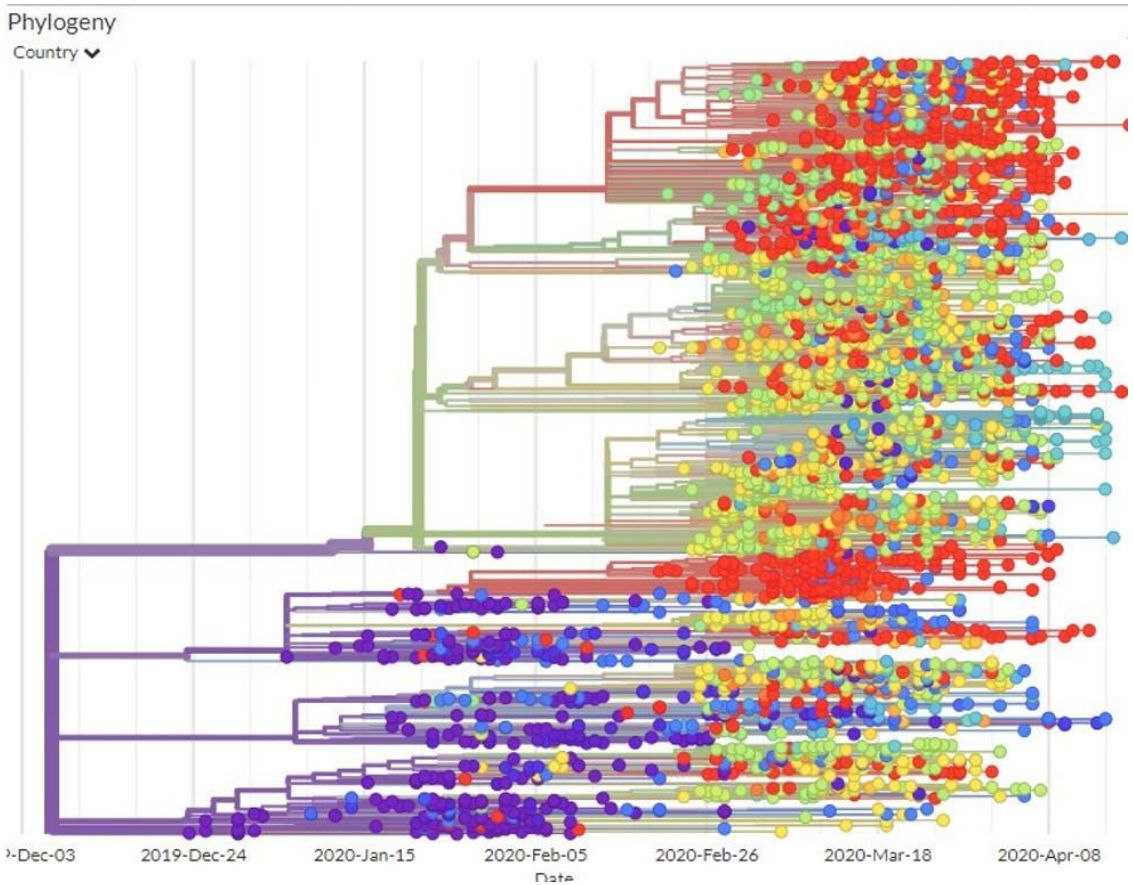
Follow the science….

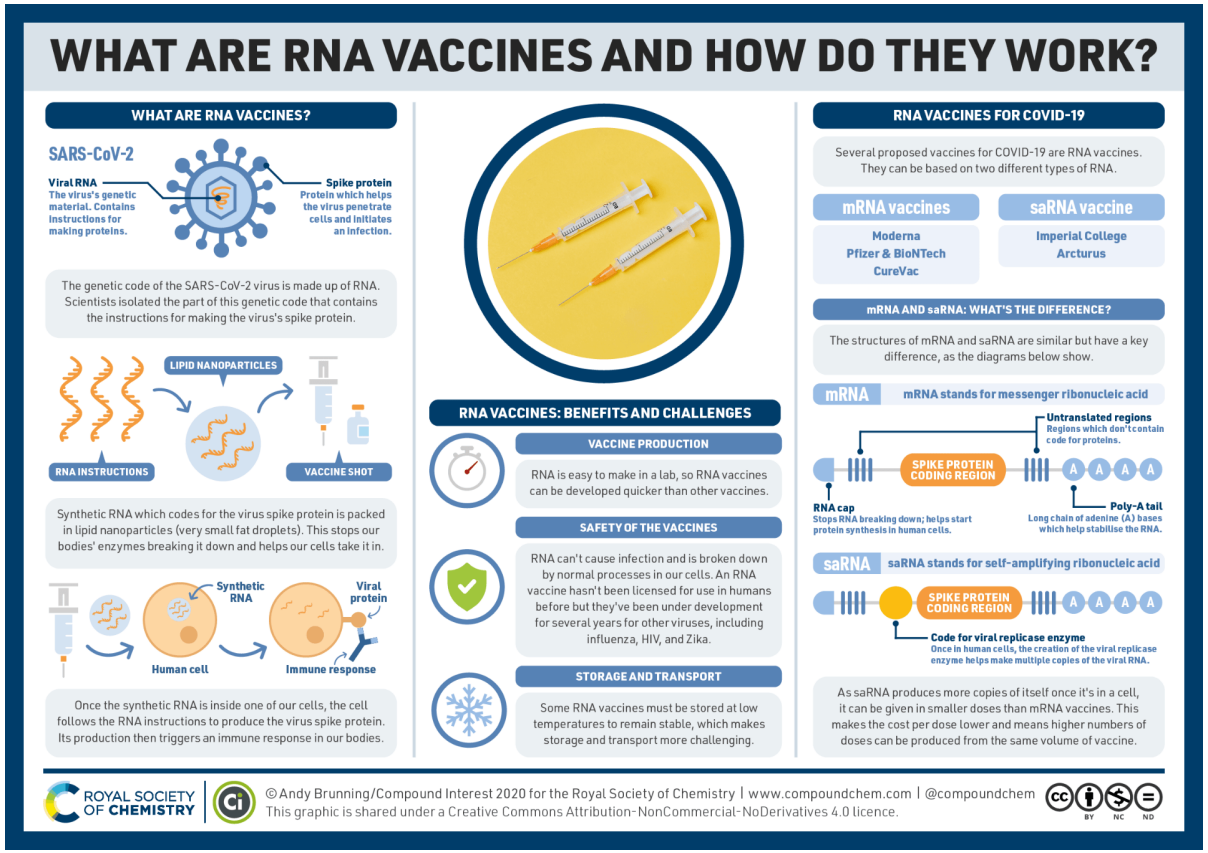
Ian Town

Chief Science Advisor

Manatū Hauora

The triumphs





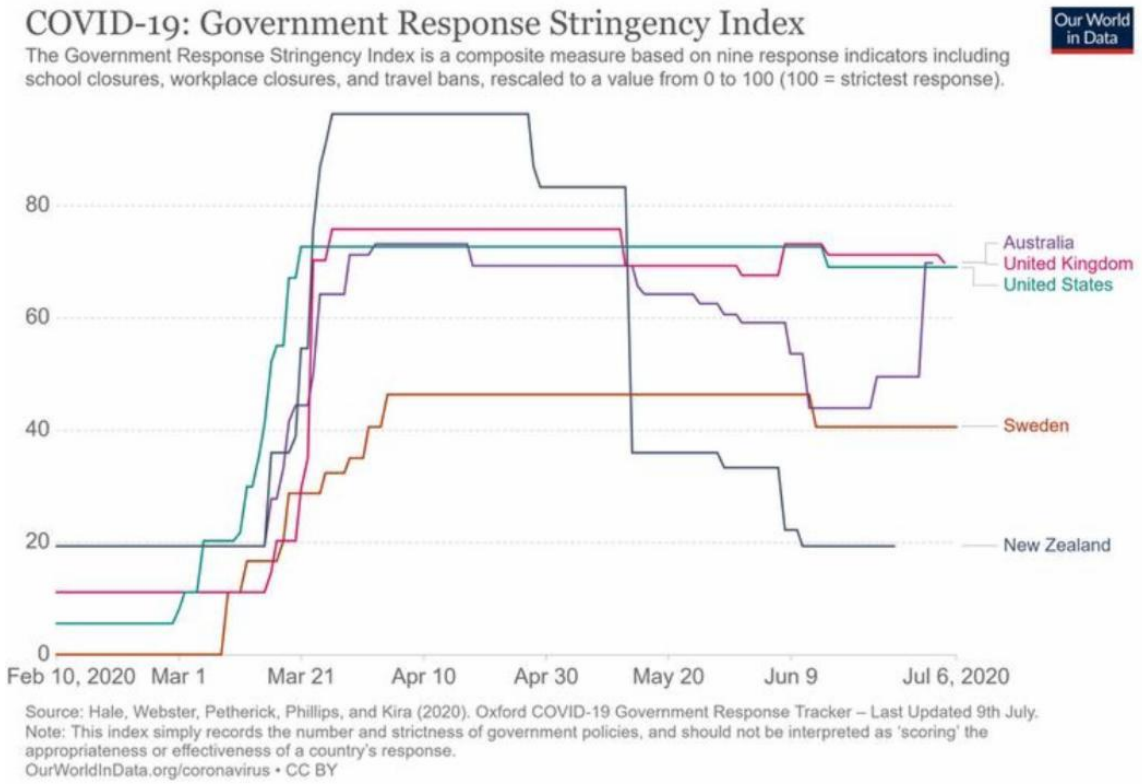
The challenges

Science into policy

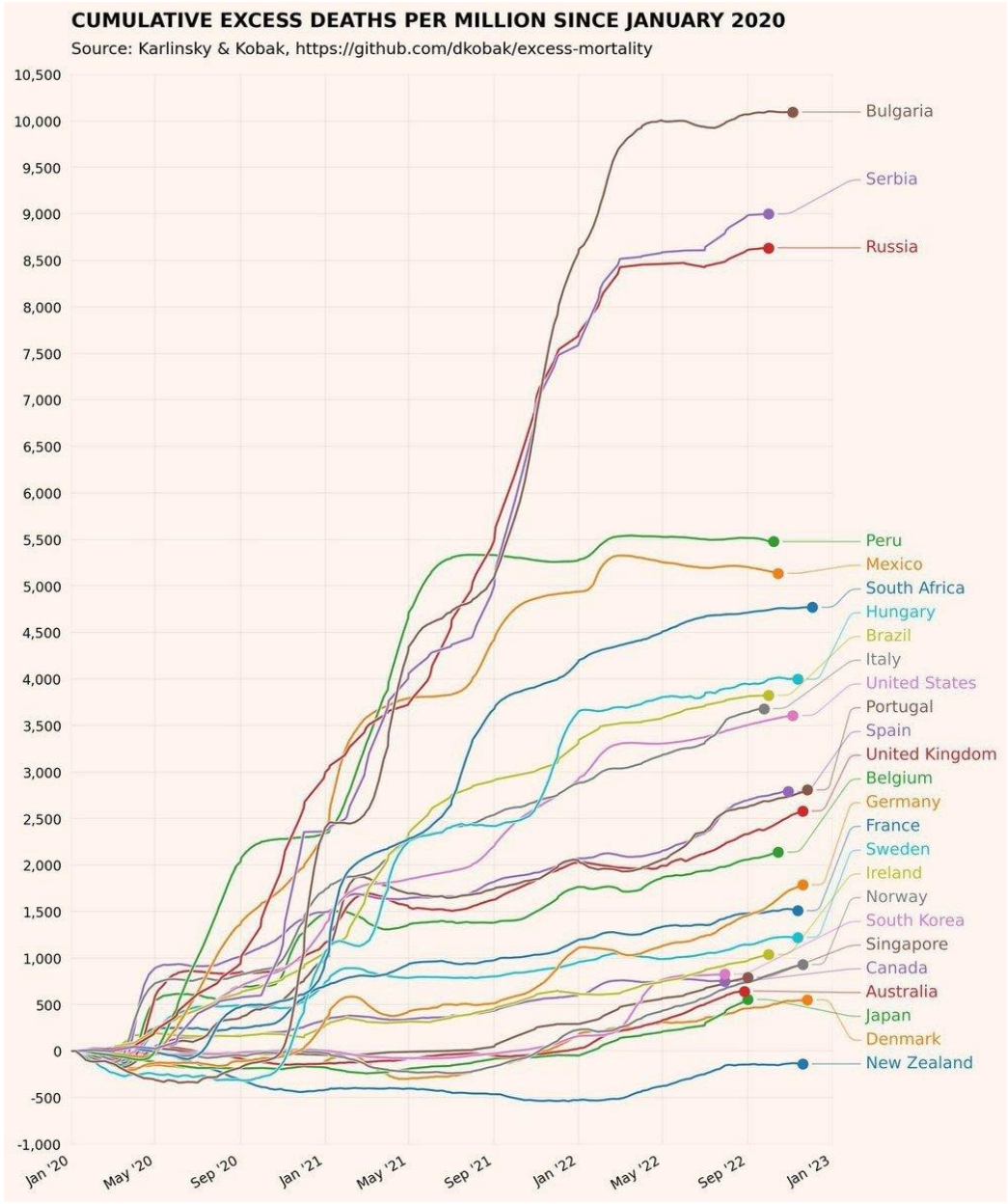
- The uncertainty and fear = precaution
- Keeping pace with the pandemic and the avalanche of science – much not peer reviewed
- Ensuring our advice (from the D-G) was as informed to the greatest extent possible by the science
- Taking people with us:
  - Colleagues across all of government
  - The public
- Communication is key
- The role of academics was deeply appreciated

What worked well

- ✓ “Go hard, go early”
- ✓ Principled but adaptive
- ✓ Centrality of equity + Treaty
- ✓ Policy-communications collaboration
- ✓ Centrally led, locally adapted for specific communities



The result


CUMULATIVE EXCESS DEATHS PER MILLION SINCE JANUARY 2020
Source: Karlinsky & Kobak, https://github.com/dkobak/excess-mortality
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Spain
United Kingdom
Belgium
Germany
France
Sweden
Ireland
Norway
South Korea
Singapore
Canada
Australia
Japan
Denmark
New Zealand

The Royal Commission of Enquiry

- Members: Professor Tony Blakely, John Whitehead, Hon Hekia Parata; https://www.covid19lessons.royalcommission.nz
- Purpose: *To strengthen Aotearoa New Zealand's preparedness for, and response to, potential future pandemics*
- Work to date: Received 300 page narrative from Ministry and interviews with all key leaders and agencies.
- Next phase: Draft report in November, and final report in June 2024
- Pandemic planning: The Commission will provide advice/guidance about the approach to pandemic planning. This is already underway within the Public Health Agency

Session 4

Speed dating and Networking

ARMS
Australasian Research Management Society

We would really like your feedback, please

Complete the Mentimeter poll
Come and talk to us, or
Fill in the suggestions box outside

We would really like your feedback, please

What would be the best next step to connect research and policy communities?

Who would you recommend as particpants for the next workshop, to attract a diverse research and policy community?

Ngā mihi nui

consensus-building
equitable
credible
confident
independent
multidisciplinary
inspiring
proactive
listening
accessible
trusted
connected
respectful
mana respected
approachable
inspired
representative
inclusive
responsive
influential
embracing-diversity
efficient
transparent