



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Petitions Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Petihana

54th Parliament
December 2024

Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Reject IHR Amendments, Pandemic Treaty Agreement until Royal Commission Reports

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Greg O'Connor, Chairperson

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Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki

Recommendation

The Petitions Committee has considered the petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki—Reject IHR Amendments, Pandemic Treaty Agreement until Royal Commission Reports—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request regarding International Health Regulations amendments and pandemic treaty

The petition was presented to the House on 14 May 2024. It requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to reject any International Health Regulations amendments and pandemic treaty agreement reached at WHA77 or thereafter, until the findings and recommendations of the rescoped COVID-19 Royal Commission are received, and New Zealand has the opportunity for public digestion of any proposals for regulatory amendment.

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) members have agreed on changes to International Health Regulations and are drafting and negotiating a new international agreement concerning pandemics.¹

International Health Regulations

The International Health Regulations provide a legal framework that defines countries' rights and obligations in public health events and emergencies that can cross borders. The regulations were first adopted in 1969 and were amended in 1973, 1981, and 2005 to include a wider range of diseases and threats to public health.

In June 2024, WHO adopted new amendments to the International Health Regulations, following the COVID-19 pandemic and other global health emergencies. The amendments include a definition of a pandemic emergency and strengthen access to medical products and financing.

Pandemic treaty

WHO member states agreed in December 2021 to establish a body to draft and negotiate a convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. This has also been referred to as a pandemic treaty. In June 2024, WHO members agreed to extend the timeline for drafting and negotiating this agreement to 2025.

¹ More information about the amendments to the International Health Regulations and negotiations towards an international pandemic agreement is [available on the website of the World Health Organization](#).

Comments from the petitioner

The petitioner asks that consideration of International Health Regulations amendments and the proposed pandemic treaty be deferred until after the NZ Royal Commission COVID-19 Lessons Learned | Te Tira Ārai Urutā has reported back on its findings and recommendations.

Mr Rzesniowiecki told us the proposed International Health Regulations amendments and pandemic treaty are based on the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, used both internationally and in New Zealand. He believes COVID-19 vaccines and other measures were neither safe nor effective. The petitioner said New Zealand should “take stock” before signing onto any internationally agreed pandemic preparation rules.

The petitioner brought four petitions on aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic to the 53rd Parliament.² His submissions on this current petition provide a summary of points from his written submissions on the earlier petitions. They also include responses to matters raised by agencies that submitted on those petitions. Mr Rzesniowiecki told us that his previous four petitions “have been ignored so far”. He said that the previous Government had only listened to its “chosen experts” and should have heard broader views.

Mr Rzesniowiecki’s submissions also provide links to reports and news coverage of other individuals and organisations that share his perspective. The petitioner told us that he believes “the COVID-19 phenomena (both the bug and the cure) were military operations” run by “the people who direct the United States military”.

The petitioner gave us a detailed explanation of his belief that the COVID-19 pandemic is connected to current military conflicts in Ukraine–Russia, China, and Israel–Palestine. He considers that New Zealand’s military and strategic alliances have contributed to the promotion and use of pharmaceutical products. He believes these products have harmed many people.

Comments from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry of Health provided a joint submission, as the issues raised in the submission relate to both agencies.

Pandemic treaty negotiations

The ministries said that the pandemic treaty negotiations did not conclude by May 2024, as consensus was not reached on key issues. At the 77th World Health Assembly it was decided that negotiations will be extended by a year. The ministries told us it is expected that a final text will be considered at the 78th World Health Assembly in May 2025.

² [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Amend Section 5 and add a new section 5A to the NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990](#); [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Undertake a public inquiry into the national COVID-19 response](#); [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Hold a referendum before amending International Health Regulations](#); [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Hold a referendum before signing the proposed WHO pandemic treaty](#)

If a pandemic treaty is adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2025, this will not be legally binding. New Zealand will carry out an assessment of the treaty before a decision is made about it. This will include consideration by Cabinet and an international treaty examination by a parliamentary select committee.

International Health Regulations

Amendments to the International Health Regulations were adopted by the 77th World Health Assembly, but are not yet legally binding. New Zealand has 18 months to consider whether to adopt the amendments. New Zealand will carry out an assessment of the International Health Regulations amendments. This will include consideration by Cabinet and an international treaty examination by a parliamentary select committee.

Our response to the petition

We acknowledge that Mr Rzesniowiecki feels that he has not been listened to in the course of his previous petitions. However, we do not consider that the petitioner was ignored. The Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament may not have agreed with the petitioner, but it nevertheless considered his submissions and reported back to the House on each of Mr Rzesniowiecki's four previous petitions on aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic response.³

We do not share Mr Rzesniowiecki's views about the origins of COVID-19, the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccinations, or the relationship between COVID-19 and current international conflicts. We think that it would not be in New Zealand's best interests to put on hold the consideration of the International Health Regulations amendments or negotiations about a pandemic treaty. We do not want to see New Zealand sidelined in these discussions.

We consider that the established approach to considering New Zealand's participation in international treaties and agreements should be followed for the International Health Regulations amendments and the potential pandemic treaty. We encourage the committees entrusted with these international treaty examinations to invite public submissions and we encourage the petitioner to participate in those processes.

³ Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament: [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Amend Section 5 and add a new section 5A to the NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990](#), November 2022.

Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament: [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Undertake a public inquiry into the national COVID-19 response](#), March 2023.

Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament: [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Hold a referendum before amending International Health Regulations](#) and [Petition of Greg Rzesniowiecki: Hold a referendum before signing the proposed WHO pandemic treaty](#), September 2023.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was referred to us on 14 May 2024. We met between 27 June and 5 December 2024 to consider it. We received written submissions from the petitioner and a joint submission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry of Health.

Committee members

Greg O'Connor (Chairperson)

Carl Bates

Greg Fleming

Francisco Hernandez

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are [available on the Parliament website](#).