



Citizens Advice Bureau New Zealand

The Citizens Advice Bureau began in war-time UK. It was established on the eve of the Second World War to support peoples' needs. With these origins, it's unsurprising that Citizens Advice Bureau New Zealand (CABNZ) has been flexible and responsive in supporting communities through COVID-19.

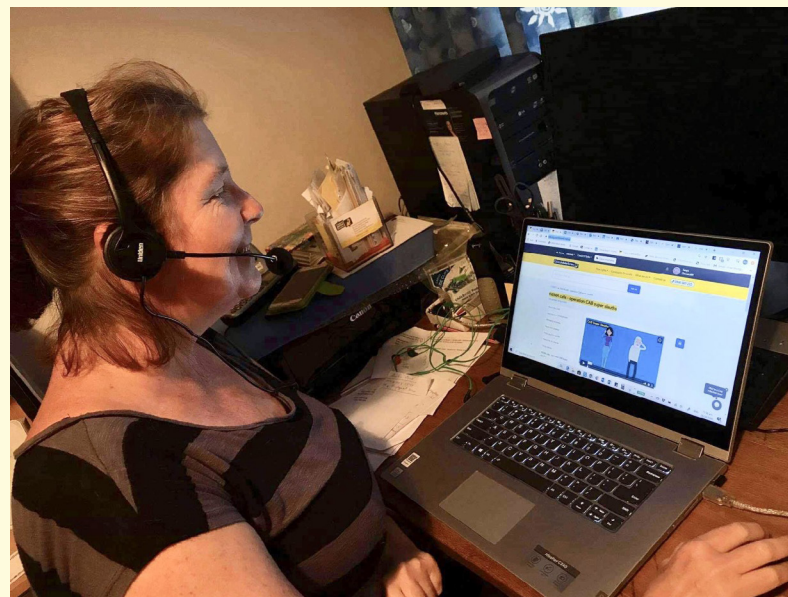
Citizens Advice Bureau New Zealand is a registered charity (CC24323) that supports 83 local CAB sites around the country. CABNZ provides free, confidential, independent information and advice to anyone, about anything. Over 2,500 trained volunteers help people understand their rights and responsibilities and how to access services they need. In turn, these people are empowered with the confidence to take action.

In January 2020 CABNZ noticed an increase in enquiries related to COVID-19. It became apparent that anxiety about COVID-19 was rapidly increasing. As a result CABNZ started planning their COVID-19 response early, well before Aotearoa moved into lockdown. When lockdown began services were already up and running from the homes of the CAB staff and volunteers around the country. CABNZ knew how valuable their services were to New Zealanders, so they ensured their transition from face-to-face to online and phone services was quick and seamless. "CAB volunteers put their hands up straight away to continue providing the CAB service, despite also dealing with the challenges of life in lockdown themselves. It's a testament to our volunteers' community spirit and drive to help their fellow New Zealanders," says Kerry Dalton, Chief Executive of CABNZ.

On the day before Aotearoa went into lockdown, CABNZ had a 360% increase in calls from concerned community members. People wanted to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to the lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic in general. Most enquiries were about employment, housing and access to food assistance. These enquiries paint a clear picture of New Zealanders struggling with the fundamentals of keeping their jobs, keeping a roof over their heads and keeping fed.

As well as providing CAB's information and advice service, CAB volunteers called 14,000 people aged over 70 as part of a National Emergency Management Agency and Ministry of Social Development national welfare programme. Volunteers checked in on those over 70 and connected them to any support they needed. This included getting people medical assistance, listening to people who were lonely, and connecting people with support services for groceries, transport and in-home care. "These calls have provided an extra safety net for the most vulnerable during these unprecedented and challenging times," says Kerry Dalton.

CABNZ also informs Government of the issues they're hearing from the public. This important aspect of their work allows Government to make improvements to policies and laws that may be negatively impacting people or communities. Throughout lockdown, CABNZ carried out weekly reviews of common enquiries. They passed their insights on to Government which informed Government response and policy decisions. CABNZ's high value insights reflect the real-time issues and challenges that people face.





From the start of lockdown through to the shift to Alert Level 1 in June, Citizens Advice Bureau helped 27,000 people find answers to their questions, in addition to their 14,000 welfare calls. This significant contribution to the wellbeing of New Zealanders has been captured in a recently released report: **Citizens Advice Bureau - Supporting people through COVID-19.**

COVID-19 increased stress levels for many people, and the CABNZ are pleased to be able to support them through these challenges. Clients have been extremely grateful for the calm and caring service provided by the CABNZ staff and volunteers.

“Our Māori name ‘Ngā Pou Whakawhirinaki o Aotearoa’ reflects that we are a source of strength in times of adversity,” says Kerry Dalton, “through the dedication of our people, I believe that is what the CABNZ has been.”

Find out more about Citizens Advice Bureau New Zealand on their [website](#) and on their [Facebook page](#).