

IMPLEMENTING MEDICINES NEW ZEALAND

Medicines New Zealand was released in December 2007, after PHARMAC's 2007/08 Statement of Intent, but gave rise to actions for PHARMAC in leading projects or assisting others in the medicines system. As these actions are not recorded in PHARMAC's Statement of Service Performance, a summary of activity is provided here, grouped by five key work areas:

1. Ongoing funding process improvement
2. Stakeholder input into PHARMAC's work
3. Optimal Input from PHARMAC's advisory committees
4. Communication about the funding process
5. Greater focus on optimal use and reducing inequalities.

1. ONGOING FUNDING PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	
Action	Progress
Review the exceptional circumstances funding and criteria to ensure that they continue to fulfil the purpose of the Exceptional Circumstances Scheme.	PHARMAC is working with DHBs and the Ministry of Health to review the exceptional circumstances schemes. PHARMAC will publicly consult on the review by 31 December 2008.
Changing medicines brands can be an issue for some people. PHARMAC will seek to develop a mechanism that will, when decisions give rise to brand changes, enable people to access funding for their existing brands of medicine in defined circumstances.	PHARMAC has revised the process it uses for determining which products are supplied under sole supply arrangements, and improved the support it offers to pharmacists and prescribers where brand changes may cause significant patient anxiety. PHARMAC will continue to consider alternative approaches to minimising the impact of brand changes.
Undertake ongoing review of and where appropriate remove specialist restrictions on prescribing.	PHARMAC has been removing specialist restrictions on prescribing since early 2007. In the past year 43 medicines have had their prescriber restrictions removed or amended. Work is continuing in this area.
Clarifying the structure and processes PHARMAC and DHBs use to work together in updated Memoranda of Understanding.	PHARMAC and DHBs have been working during 2007/08 to enhance their already strong working relationship. Work on updated Memoranda of Understanding to reflect this relationship will be completed by 30 June 2009.
Moving, with DHBs, to a principles based approach to setting the community pharmaceuticals budget.	PHARMAC and DHBs referred to the principles identified in the Medicines Strategy consultation document when setting the 2008/09 Community Pharmaceuticals Budget. PHARMAC will be participating in the Ministry of Health-led work on moving towards a principles-based approach to budget-setting during 2008/09. This is a significant piece of work that will feed into, but not be completed for, the 2009/10 budget-setting process.
Participating in the Ministry's initiative to bring together agencies engaged in access-related activities to ensure a collaborative and cohesive approach to ensuring New Zealanders have access to the medicines they need.	PHARMAC will participate in this work once it has been initiated by the Ministry of Health.

2. STAKEHOLDER INPUT INTO PHARMAC'S WORK

Action	Progress
Hold a regular PHARMAC Forum for interested stakeholders to comment on PHARMAC's operation, including stakeholder engagement activity.	The inaugural PHARMAC Forum was held in December 2007. A document identifying the responses to, and actions arising from, suggestions made at the Forum was distributed to all attendees in July 2008. A report-back on progress on the Forum actions will be a feature of the next Forum, planned for March 2009.
Formally invite funding applicants to meet PHARMAC staff at the start of the funding process.	PHARMAC started formally inviting funding applicants to meet with PHARMAC staff in April 2008.
Encourage stakeholders to provide views on individual funding applications and consider these in decision-making.	<p>PHARMAC has changed some of its documents to better outline medicine funding proposals, and to better explain decisions that have been made. Specific changes were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consultation letters – these now summarise the funding proposal, possible impacts on doctors, pharmacists or patients, with more detail as needed. These changes are aimed at making the consultation documents more accessible to a wider audience. notification letters – As with consultation letters, the notifications now include sections outlining what decisions mean for specific groups. They also summarise the comments received in consultation. The changes aim to explain funding decisions more clearly to wider readerships. <p>Other work in progress includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating a mechanism to include early public input to the medicines funding process. Investigating the use of longer consultation periods, when appropriate. Making greater use of email and electronic formats to seek consultation responses.
Publicise opportunities for stakeholder input into decisions.	The front page of PHARMAC's website features opportunities for participation in consultation which can be received via RSS feeds. PHARMAC's consultation page is now included in the new zealand.govt.nz website consultation search. PHARMAC will continue to work to identify additional opportunities for raising awareness of consultation opportunities.
Provide consumers with guidance on how to have input into the funding decision-making process.	Finalising this guidance is dependent on other work on consultation described above. PHARMAC will make guidance publicly available by 31 December 2008.

3. OPTIMAL INPUT FROM PHARMAC'S ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Action	Progress
Undertaking broad consultation on changes to PTAC's Operational Guidelines to ensure optimal arrangements are in place for PTAC to provide free and frank advice to the PHARMAC Board.	PHARMAC consulted on PTAC's operational guidelines from May – June 2008. Stakeholders were invited to make written submissions and, if they wished, to meet with PHARMAC staff to discuss their views. The revised Guidelines will be available by 31 December 2008.

3. OPTIMAL INPUT FROM PHARMAC'S ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Action	Progress
Reviewing, with the Ministry of Health, the PTAC appointment protocol to ensure that it best supports the independent appointment process required by the NZPHD Act 2000.	PHARMAC has been participating in the Ministry of Health-led review of the PTAC appointment protocol.
Reviewing the CAC terms of reference to ensure optimal arrangements for CAC to undertake its legislative role.	PHARMAC will undertake public consultation on the Terms of Reference for CAC by the end of 2008.

4. COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE FUNDING PROCESS

Action	Progress
Developing user-friendly and linked websites across the medicines system, enabling stakeholders to easily navigate the medicine system and find the information they require.	PHARMAC launched its new website in April 2008. The website provides more information about, and an interactive chart of, the funding process as well as tailored pages for different categories of stakeholders. The website includes links to other agencies in the medicines system.
Publishing public summaries of decisions on medicine funding applications.	Changes have been made to notification letters to provide more information on medicine funding decisions. We will be publishing public summaries of funding decisions by 30 June 2009.

5. GREATER FOCUS ON OPTIMAL USE AND REDUCING INEQUALITIES

Action	Progress
Assisting in the development and implementation of a national formulary (including an electronic prescription ordering system and New Zealand-specific guidelines) to support best practice prescribing. This would include examining links to a comprehensive medicines reference source and to the Pharmaceutical Schedule	PHARMAC worked with the Ministry of Health on the initial business case for the development of a national medicines formulary, and will continue to contribute as required.
Participating in the Ministry's work to consider and implement a mechanism to support a cohesive and coordinated approach to optimal use of medicines practices.	PHARMAC has continued working with District Health Boards to ensure that the PHARMAC Access and Optimal Use Campaigns are well-integrated into DHB activity. A new joint working group, including PHARMAC and DHB representatives, has been formed. PHARMAC will assist with the Ministry of Health's work on a mechanism for optimal use of medicines practices.