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Pharmaceutical Management Agency (Pharmac)

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held on Tuesday 30 September 2025 at 8.30am

At Naumi Hotel, Wellington

Attendees:

Board members

Paula Bennett	Chair
Dr Peter Bramley	Deputy Chair
Talia Anderson-Town	Board member
Anna Adams	Board member
Lucy Elwood	Board member

Apologies

Dr Margaret Wilsher	Board member
Rhiannon Braund	Board Observer, PTAC Deputy Chair

Board Observers

Robyn Manuel	Board Observer, CAC Chair (via Teams)
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Pharmac staff in attendance

Natalie McMurtry	Chief Executive
Brendan Boyle	Chief Executive Advisor
Catherine Epps	Director, Medical Devices
David Hughes	Director, Advice and Assessment/CMO
Michael Johnson	Director, Strategy, Policy & Performance
Caroline de Luca	Acting Director, Pharmaceuticals
Nicola Ngawati	Director, Equity & Engagement
Maria Robertson	Director, Corporate Services
Trevor Simpson	Kaituruki Māori - Director Māori
Jacqui Webber	Board Secretary (Minute taker)

Attendees joined the meeting to present relevant papers: Saar Cohen-Ronen, Jannel Fisher and Sean Dougherty.

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1. Welcome and Opening of Meeting

The Chair welcomed everyone and formally opened the meeting at 8.35am.

2. Chair's Report

2.1. Chair's Verbal Update

The Chair provided an update on recent activities. She noted that she is consistently receiving excellent feedback about Pharmac, with many recognising a significant step change in the Organisation. The Minister has also been speaking highly of Pharmac. The Deputy Chair was thanked for stepping in during the Chair's recent leave.

2.2. Minutes of Board meetings

The Board **resolved** to **adopt** the minutes of the meetings held on 29 July and 2 September 2025, subject to minor amendments.

2.3. Interest Register

The Board **noted** the interest register and no conflicts were registered. Updates were notified following the meeting.

3. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive took the report as read and there was a wide-ranging discussion on the paper.

The previous Acting Chief Executive noted he had had a meeting with the new Ombudsman which was informative.

Rule 8.1b – We are adopting an evidence-based approach in line with Rule 8.1b. A discussion is scheduled with CTAC in November to review current progress and gather input.

The Chair recommended that staff prepare a paper for the February 2026 meeting, to outline our current status and strategic direction. The Board would like to receive examples of where children are not able to access medicines. This will provide an opportunity to assess progress and align on next steps.

Ambulance medicines –

[REDACTED] An update is expected for the Board in November. Other agencies such as ACC, Corrections, and MSD also procure medicines independently, and their roles are being considered in this process.

[REDACTED]

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The Board **noted** the:

- Chief Executive's report for August 2025
- Senior Leadership Team Engagement Calendar
- Financials for August 2025, as presented to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee
- Chief Executive's activities since the last meeting.

4. Decision Papers

4.1. Update on Equity and Te Tiriti policies - Summary of feedback on Equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi policies

This paper provided the Board with a summary of feedback from staff and the PSA on proposed changes to the Equity and Te Tiriti policies.

The Board and staff had a wide ranging discussion on the policies at the Strategy Workshop on 29 September and key points to note as follows:

4.1.1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi Policy

- Following consultation with staff and the PSA in August-September 2025, and consideration of feedback received, the Board agreed to withdraw Pharmac's Te Tiriti o Waitangi policy.
- No other entities have an independent Te Tiriti o Waitangi policy in the same form as Pharmac – Pharmac is an outlier.
- The Government is proposing to amend relevant sections of the Healthy Futures Pae Ora Act 2022 in the near future, which will likely have an impact.
- The Government introduced into Parliament the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill to clarify the role of the principles of the Treaty and the health sector principles. The legislation is expected to pass in 2025.
- The Board observed that, while the Crown itself has Treaty of Waitangi obligations, these are relevant to Pharmac only as directed by the Government and in legislation.
- Work is taking place within MOH and Health NZ to align with the expected legislation changes, including a definition of health need. It was agreed that we should align Pharmac with the MOH/HNZ position once determined.

The Board:

- **noted** that Pharmac consulted with the PSA and staff on changes to the Equity and Te Tiriti policies
- **noted** feedback was received from three individual staff and one from the PSA and Board discussed the feedback received
- **resolved to withdraw** Pharmac's Te Tiriti o Waitangi policy as at 30 September 2025. As a result of this decision:
 - (a) The Treaty policy is to be removed from Pharmac's website.

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- (b) References to the Treaty policy in Pharmac's other policies are to be amended, including the Engagement Strategy 2023-2026.
- (c) Current work on related projects (such as Pharmac's Equity policy, Engagement Strategy and Māori responsiveness framework) should continue to reflect Pharmac's aspirations for Māori health, in line with current Government directives and the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill and be consistent with the withdrawal of the Treaty policy.

4.1.2. Equity Policy

The Board and staff had a wide ranging discussion on the Policy. Staff noted that no specific comments were received through the consultation process, from staff or the PSA on the language changes.

Discussion points included:

- Remove the second bullet from Appendix Two.
- Note that the Policy will possibly need to be revisited, post likely amendments to the Pae Ora Act.
- The strategic direction space on the website needs to be reviewed and amended with correct documents in place and links to be checked.
- When an updated Equity Policy is finalised, Pharmac staff to walk the Board through the website and how the overall story is being told, to ensure coherence.

The Board commented as follows:

1. The revised Health Equity Policy should only concern Pharmac's public decisions to fund pharmaceuticals and medical devices for New Zealanders, according to Pharmac's statutory purpose under s 68 of the Healthy Futures Pae Ora Act 2022. Matters of internal equity (for example employment diversity, equity and inclusion) should not be intermingled, but instead could be addressed in a separate policy for Pharmac as a Crown Entity.
2. The Health Equity Policy should state how Pharmac will fulfil its statutory purpose (s 68) to "*secure for eligible people in need of pharmaceuticals, the best health outcomes that are reasonably achievable from pharmaceutical treatment and from within the amount of funding provide*" and the general statutory purpose to "*achieve equity in health outcomes among New Zealand's population groups*" (s 3).
3. The Health Equity Policy should reflect:
 - (a) The Minister's directions to Pharmac as set out in the Letter of Expectations
 - (b) General Government directions on health, including the current Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027, 2024 Cabinet Office Circular on Needs-based Service Provision and the pending amendments to the Healthy Futures Pae Ora Act 2022
 - (c) Pharmac's own identification of population health disparities, where the Board has resolved that these are a priority for improvement by pharmaceutical and medical device funding decisions (as expressed in Pharmac's Statement of Intent and Statement of Performance Expectations) - for example, Māori rural populations, child cancer patients, etc.

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The Board:

- **requested** that the website be updated to reflect that the current Equity Policy is *under review*
- **deferred** its decision, subject to a revised draft of the Policy being presented at the 9 December Board meeting and anticipating clarity on proposed changes to the Pae Ora Act
- **requested** that a one pager accompany the proposed Equity Policy paper, outlining the changes.

4.2. Draft Annual Report 2024/25

This paper presented Pharmac's draft Annual Report 2024/25 for Board consideration and feedback. To note - Audit NZ have not yet completed their financial and non-financial performance audits.

Comments included:

- Audit NZ are still working on measures and should provide their opinion by the end of October 2025.
- The Chair's introduction has been signed off.
- Re the reference to 2022 response – page 8 of report – tweak wording as not closed at 30 June.
- Can staff consider adding a footnote to the table around the funding story. 2024/25 medicine budget dropped - indicate why the figure dropped?

The Board **noted**:

- the draft 2024/25 Annual Report and provided feedback
- that Audit NZ have indicated they intend to issue their 2024/25 audit opinion before 31 October 2025
- that under the Crown Entities Act, we are required to provide our Annual Report to the Associate Minister of Health no later than 15 working days after receiving the audit opinion
- that approval will be sought for the Board Chair and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Chair to approve and sign out the Annual Report, Statement of Responsibility and the Letter of Representation for the year ended 30 June 2025, once Audit New Zealand have confirmed the financial and non-financial reporting in the Annual Report (separate item on this agenda).

4.3. Proposal to implement 12-month prescriptions

This paper requested Board approval on a proposal to enable people in the community to be prescribed funded medicines and other products, for up to 12 months on a single prescription, where considered appropriate by their prescriber.

The proposal reflects the Government's decision to extend prescription durations, through amendments to the Medicines Regulations 1984. The funding of those extended prescriptions needs to be implemented through changes to the Pharmaceutical Schedule.

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Staff spoke to the paper and comments included:

- we are currently looking at making special authority approvals for lifetime duration

- The Board expressed their thanks to staff for all the work that has gone into this.

It was recommended that, having regard to the decision-making framework set out in Pharmac's Operating Policies and Procedures, the Board:

- **resolved** to amend the General Rules of the Pharmaceutical Schedule to allow funded supply of medicines on a single prescription of up to 12 months, from 1 February 2026, as set out in Appendix One
- **resolved** to amend the General Rules of the Pharmaceutical Schedule to allow repeat dispensings after the Special Authority expiry date to complete the balance of up to three months' supply, from 1 February 2026, as set out in Appendix One
- **resolved** to amend the quantity restrictions on selected products from 1 February 2026, to accommodate longer prescriptions, as set out in Appendix One
- **resolved** to amend the Special Authority approval length on selected medicines from 1 February 2026 to better support intended treatment periods, as set out in Appendix One
- **noted** that the amendments to the General Rules of the Pharmaceutical Schedule reflect proposed amendments to the Medicines Regulations 1984
- **noted** that the amendments to the General Rules of the Pharmaceutical Schedule are contingent on the Medicines Regulations 1984 being amended and in force
- **noted** that the implementation date of 1 February 2026, is contingent on:
 - amendments to the Medicines Regulations 1984 being in force by 1 February 2026
 - changes to prescriber and pharmacy systems and Health NZ claims determination and payments systems being implemented by 1 February 2026
- **noted** that extensive consultation on this proposal was undertaken and all responses have been carefully considered.

4.4. Proposal to award Principal Supply Status for fulvestrant injection

This paper sought a decision from the Board on a proposal to award Principal Supply Status for fulvestrant injection to InterPharma (NZ) Limited, resulting from Pharmac's 2024/25 annual Invitation to Tender.

The Board:

- **resolved to accept** the tender from InterPharma (NZ) Limited for its brand of fulvestrant (Fulvestrant EVER Pharma) to be the Principal Supply Status brand for fulvestrant inj 50 mg per ml, 5 ml in the Community and Health New Zealand hospitals, as set out in the paper

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- **noted** that consultation has been undertaken on this proposal and that the feedback has been fully considered in the development of this proposal
 - **noted** that this decision would result in a brand change and that this would be the first brand change for fulvestrant injection in New Zealand.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

4.6. Signing off Annual Report, Statement of Responsibility and the Letter of Representation

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee (FAR) recommended that the Board provide their approval for the Board Chair and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Chair, to sign out the finalised documents for the Annual Report, outside of a Board meeting.

The Board:

- **noted** that, subject to the FAR Committee having considered and approved this recommendation, the Board is asked to approve it
- **approved** the Board Chair and the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Chair signing the Annual Report, Statement of Responsibility, and Letter of Representation for the year ended 30 June 2025, once Audit New Zealand has confirmed the financial and non-financial reporting
- **noted** that the finalised Annual Report will be circulated to all Board members.

4.7. Appointment of Attorneys for Pharmac

This paper sought the Board's approval to appointment two new attorneys for Pharmac under section 129(1) of the Crown Entities Act.

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The Board **approved**:

- the appointment of Natalie McMurtry as an attorney for Pharmac
- the appointment of Saar Cohen-Ronen as an attorney for Pharmac
- corresponding amendments to the Board to CE Delegation Policy and Board Manual.

Action The Board requested a paper confirming the changes/updates to the Delegations Policy.

5. Key Discussion and Information Papers

5.1. Data and Digital September Update

This paper provided a status update of the work to support the Data and Digital strategy, approved by the Board in January 2025.

Staff spoke to the paper and particular comments included:

- The Director, Corporate Service is taking a more integrated approach to data and digital – in terms of the core business – not a standalone.
- The Board queried staffing to support this work – staff confirmed the team will increase to accommodate work, including some permanent staff and some fixed term staff to run the project.
- In future updates, the Board would like staff to reinforce that the project has to fit within the limited funding available and to include a focus on AI and how it can be a useful tool for the business.
- Pharmac are purchasing off the shelf products rather than building and tailoring one offs, thus keeping it simple and affordable.
- We need to ensure that we have ongoing funding and don't spend all the budget this year.
- The Board **noted** this update on the work underway and the near horizon for the Data and Digital (D&D) Strategy delivery projects.

5.2. Update on Pharmac Reset Programme

This paper provided an update on the Reset Programme, including progress on the eight actions in the first 90-day plan and work underway with the Consumer and Patient Working Group to develop future 90-day plans.

This paper was taken as read and staff provided a brief update, noting today is the final day of the first 90 day plan.

The Board **noted**:

- progress on the first 90-day plan, including three actions completed and three actions on track to be completed this quarter

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- learnings from quarter one, including the need to reduce the number of actions per quarter to allow for more meaningful engagement and implementation
- role of the Consumer and Patient Working Group in identifying and prioritising future actions using a structured framework.

Action: Prior to Valuing Life Summit, provide the Board with notes so they have a clear understanding of the work programme – key messages (Jannel to provide to Jacqui for distribution).

5.3. Pharmaceutical transactions report

The purpose of this paper was to provide the Board with an advanced overview of current issues relating to pharmaceuticals funded through the medicines budget, including current significant supply issues and the contentious, large or significant pharmaceutical transactions that staff are currently progressing.

The Board **noted:**

- the large and/or significant medicines transactions that are currently planned or in progress
- our work to change the consultation process for the annual tender
- upcoming public consultations and decision notifications.

The Board commented that there are good news stories here – we need to make sure the NZ public are aware of these.

5.4. Medical Devices Transaction Report and Programme Delivery Update

This paper described the commercial and other key activity we have underway to achieve best health outcomes from the hospital medical devices portfolio.

It provided the Board with an overview of current issues relating to management of the hospital medical devices portfolio including current significant supply issues and contentious or significant transactions being progressed.

The Board commented that the Minister wants to be world class in this area – the NZ Institute of Advanced Technology would be good to engage with (Acting Chief Executive will provide a contact to the Director Medical Devices).

- The Board **noted** the update on progress with medical devices portfolio management.

Action: The Board requested a summary of what the new model will look like in the future and would like to see an overview of the next steps programme. Can we also include something on the Suppliers perspective – February Board.

The Board Chair would like to have a morning tea with the team if possible, to acknowledge what the team have achieved – the board acknowledge the tenacity and maturity of the team.

5.5. Update on Health Sector Agreements and Payments (HSAAP) Programme

This paper provided the Board with an update on the Health Sector Agreements and Payments (HSAAP) programme and work that we have commenced work with Health NZ to support the delivery of the programme.

Staff noted that there has been a huge amount of testing with Pharmac and HNZ and final testing will be completed tomorrow.

The Board **noted**:

- that transition of subsidy payments made to community pharmacies to the new HSAAP system is planned to be delivered during October 2025

[REDACTED]

- that Pharmac's involvement in the HSAAP programme is likely to continue until at least 2027.

5.6. Implementation team – six month update (March to September 2025)

Staff provided the Board with the six month update on the range of work undertaken by the Implementation team. This update covered the period from March to September 2025.

The Board **noted**:

- the six month update report on implementation activities completed to address medicine supply issues, support Pharmac's transactional decisions, respond to enquiries and promote the responsible use of medicines and medical devices
- we have started implementation work to support medical devices following Request for Proposal (RFP) processes
- we continue to engage with and utilise feedback from the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) to support our work.

5.7. Communications and Government Services Report

This paper summarised recent communications and government services activity and the impact of Pharmac's work.

The Board **noted**:

- that eight media releases were distributed in July and August as part of Pharmac's proactive media approach
- the key findings of the Public Sector Reputation Index and work underway to identify opportunities to enhance Pharmac's reputation
- that 100% timeliness was achieved for OIA responses from 1 July – 31 August 2025
- that ChatGPT is now actively referring people to Pharmac's website.

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5.8. Engagement Strategy Implementation Update

This paper provided the Board with an update on the implementation of Pharmac's Engagement Strategy.

The Board commented that we need to continually keep our good news stories top of mind, eg highlighting how many medicines we have funded, not just 13 cancer medicines.

- The Board **noted** progress on the implementation of Pharmac's Engagement Strategy.

Action: The Board requested that the Public Affairs strategy be presented at the February Board meeting.

5.9. Staff Engagement Survey Results and Implementation Plan

This paper presented the results of the 2025 annual engagement survey and updated the Board on the action planning underway across Pharmac, to create positive change in employee engagement.

The Board commented that it would be useful to have a communications plan for the Board to the Organisation and in reverse.

The Board:

- **noted** the 2025 engagement survey results
- **noted** the leadership and organisational action planning underway
- **agreed** to an update from SLT on action planning progress in February 2026.

Action: Action Planning progress to be presented at February 2026 Board meeting.

5.10. Carbon Neutral Government Programme Reporting

This paper updated the Board on the progress of Pharmac's commitment to the Carbon Neutral Government Programme (CNGP) led by the Ministry for the Environment, to reduce our carbon emissions by 42% by 2030.

- The Board **noted** the Greenhouse Gas Emission ISO 14064-1:2018 report for 2024/25 and the achievement of our 2030 reduction target, six years earlier than originally expected.

5.11. Legal Report

The Board and staff had a wide ranging discussion on this paper.

- The Board **noted** the legal update.

5.12. Review of the Exceptional Circumstances Framework and Associated Policies and Procedures

This paper provided the Board with an interim update on the planned review of the [Exceptional Circumstances Framework](#) (the Framework) and its associated policies, in partnership with Pharmac's Reset Programme. It outlined how the review is being planned,

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including engagement with the Consumer and Patient Working Group to discuss the draft approach. A comprehensive paper detailing the full scope and outcomes of the review will be provided to the Board at a later stage, once approval to commence has been obtained.

- The Board **noted** and **discussed** the Exceptional Circumstances Framework and Associated Policies and Procedures update.

6. Noting Papers

6.1. Record of Previous Meeting(s)

- The Board **noted** and **endorsed** the minutes of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 25 July 2025.

6.2. Summary of the July and August 2025 Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) Meetings

This paper informed the Board of advice received from the CAC at their recent meetings.

The CAC Chair spoke to the paper.

The Board **noted**:

- the minutes from the July and August CAC meetings
- the summary of key issues across the meeting.

6.3. Summary of August 2025 PTAC advice and recommendations

This paper informed the Board of recommendations made and advice given by PTAC at its recent meeting.

The Board **noted**:

- the summary of the record of the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee (PTAC) meeting held in August 2025
- the summary of issues.

6.4. Board and Committee Member Terms and Meeting Attendance Register

The Board **noted**:

- the Board and Committee member terms; and
- the Meeting Attendance Register.

6.5. Board Correspondence

The Board **noted** the correspondence sent / received for the prior month.

6.6. Board Actions

The Board **noted** there were no Board Actions.

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6.7. Matters Arising

The Board **noted** the Matters Arising schedule.

6.8. Board Annual Agenda for 2025 and 2026

The Board **noted** the Board Annual Agenda for 2025 and 2026.

6.9. Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

The Board **noted** the Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations.

7. General Business

7.1. *Articles of interest* – the Board would like this reintroduced. As a starting point, a ‘reading room’ will be added in the Diligent Resource Centre.

7.2. *Pharmac's Vision*

At the 29 September strategy meeting, the Board considered a paper on Pharmac’s vision and mission and the opportunity arising from the arrival of the new Chief Executive.

The Board observed that:

- a. Pharmac’s vision statement should show, with heart and determination, how Pharmac will fulfil its statutory purpose (s 68) of “*securing for eligible people in need of pharmaceuticals, the best health outcomes that are reasonably achievable from pharmaceutical treatment and from within the amount of funding provided*”. It should be succinct.
- b. Pharmac’s vision statement should reflect its strategic priorities and performance measures as set out in its Statement of Intent, Statement of Performance Expectations and Government directions to Pharmac (such as in the LoE). For example:
 - i. As well as defining vision by increased pharmaceutical spend and access to medicines, the mission could also focus on the health outcomes for New Zealanders delivered by that spend
 - ii. As well as focussing on quicker approval processes, the vision could include the value and technological innovation delivered by Pharmac’s approach
 - iii. It would also be appropriate to recognise the medical device decision-making that Pharmac was yesterday entrusted with by the Government
- c. Pharmac’s vision should recognise that the Government’s and Pharmac’s strategic health priorities will evolve over time, as the health needs of New Zealanders evolve.

The Board:

- **resolved** that a new, short statement of Pharmac’s vision should be prepared, with the Chief Executive to lead developing this statement of a ‘north star’.
- **resolved** that it is not necessary to change Pharmac’s established five values: whakarongo / listen, tūhono / connect, wānanga / learn together, māia / be courageous, and kaitiakitanga / preserve, protect and shelter, and preferred to build on these to define a mission. As a result of this decision:

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- a. the Vision section in 'Strategic Direction' on Pharmac's website is to be marked as 'Under Review', and this section of the website should be simplified so that the Board's intention is clear
- b. a proposed vision statement will be submitted to the Board in December, with a view to adoption of a final version in February 2026.
- **resolved** that, once the vision statement and Health Equity policy is complete, these documents should be placed prominently on Pharmac's website with the Statement of Intent, Statement of Performance Expectations and the Minister's Letter of Expectations. In this way, all of Pharmac's strategic, legislative, and governance direction will be discoverable by the public, patients and the health sector in one place, at the "front door".

The meeting closed at 12.10pm with a karakia.

Date of Next Meeting: 4 November 2025

Approved

4 November 2025

Paula Bennett, Chair

Date