

Minutes of the Consumer and Patient Working Group Meeting Wednesday 30 July 2025

The meeting was held online from 9am to 11am.

Present:

Dr Malcolm Mulholland (Chair)
Tim Edmonds
Chris Higgins
Francesca Holloway
Gerard Rushton
Rachel Smalley (Deputy Chair)
Tracy Tierney
Deon York

Pharmac staff in attendance

Jannel Fisher (Reset Programme Manager)
Michael Johnson (Director Strategy, Policy and Performance)

Apologies

Libby Burgess
Trent Lash

1. Karakia and welcome

Opening by the Chair

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the [previous meeting minutes](#) were approved.

- Moved by: Tracy
- Seconded by: Francesca

3. Interest register

Updates and declarations were noted.

4. Pae Ora legislation discussion

The group discussed potential amendments to the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 and the advice to be provided to Associate Minister of Health, Minister Seymour.

Director Strategy, Policy and Performance confirmed that:

- Changes to Pharmac legislation can be introduced at the Health Select Committee stage
- Pharmac provides advice to Ministers and the Ministry of Health but will not at this time submit directly to the Health Select Committee.
- Minister Brown is the Minister responsible for the Pae Ora legislation.

Concerns were raised by members about the phrase “from within the available funds” in Pharmac’s statutory objective. Some members viewed it as an unnecessary constraint and misaligned with patient and consumer expectations. Others noted that budget references are inconsistent with other government agencies and already required under the Crown Entities Act and Public Finance Act.

Members discussed potential unintended consequences of removing the phrase, including its impact on commercial negotiations and government accountability. While Pharmac’s ability to seek out-of-cycle funding was acknowledged, concerns were raised that current budget bids cannot reflect patient and system-level impact and may disadvantage Pharmac.

The group emphasised the need for statutory objectives to be enabling and future-focused to support the 5-year reform. Members saw an opportunity to strengthen the objectives to reflect a whole-of-system approach, allowing for budget bids that demonstrate broader fiscal and societal benefits. It was also noted that the HTA framework is fundamental and there was disappointment that the budget bid to support this work was unsuccessful.

Additional suggestions for statutory objective changes included:

- Emphasising innovation and timely access
- Including societal and fiscal impacts
- Strengthening equity language
- Changing language from pharmaceuticals to medical products

The Director of Strategy, Policy and Performance proposed that the view of the Working Group be put forward to the Minister Seymour as part of Pharmac’s formal advice. It was discussed that Working Group members should avoid making a submission in their capacity as Pharmac’s Consumer and Patient Working Group, as this could be perceived to be reflecting Pharmac’s position.

Written feedback from Libby and Trent was considered in the discussion.

Motion:

That the Working Group supports the removal of the budget reference in Pharmac’s statutory objective.

- Moved by: Malcolm
- Seconded by: Tim
- Opposed by: Rachel
- Motion carried

Agreed actions:

- Internal Pharmac discussion documents will incorporate feedback from the Working Group.
- Chris, Tim and Libby will draft advice to be included as an appendix to Pharmac’s advice to the Minister.

- The draft will reflect diverse perspectives (not consensus) and be shared with the Working Group early next week.
 - Final advice to be submitted to Pharmac by 13 August 2025.
- The Working Group will receive a copy of the advice provided to the Minister.
- Members will consider preparing individual submissions and inviting broader consumer representation into these submissions.

5. General business

- Members unable to attend meetings may provide written feedback, which will be considered during discussions. As conversations may evolve, members are encouraged to follow up with the Chair to discuss meeting outcomes. Written feedback should be circulated to members as early as possible to support informed discussion.
- Members were asked to review the proposed meeting schedule and upcoming discussion topics as a priority. Feedback should be provided to the Reset Programme team to enable timely scheduling of meetings and commissioning of relevant discussion papers.

6. Agreement on public communications

- It was confirmed that members may share the topic of upcoming meetings with their wider networks and engage in discussion about the subject matter. However, members must not disclose any confidential information shared as part of the Working Group papers or meetings.
- It was confirmed that members, with the support of the Chair and following a 'no surprises approach' with the Reset Programme Manager, are welcome to issue public statements about their work. The Pharmac communications team is available to assist with this.

Close of meeting at 10.50am.

Next meeting is 2.00pm – 4.00pm on Thursday 14 August to discuss Pharmac's 2026/27 budget bid.