PHARMAC
TE PĀTAKA WHAIORANGA

Minutes of the
Consumer and Patient Working Group Meeting
Tuesday 21 October 2025

The meeting was held online from 2pm to 4pm.

Present:
Malcolm Mulholland (Chair)
Tim Edmonds
Chris Higgins
Francesca Holloway
Trent Lash
Gerard Rushton
Tracy Tierney

Pharmac staff in attendance:
Jannel Fisher (Reset Programme Manager)
Sarona Iosefa (Reset Programme Engagement Lead)
Sam McCarthy (Reset Programme Project Manager)
Becky Littlewood (Reset Programme Coordinator)
Caro De Luca (Expert Advisory Manager)
Ben Campbell-Macdonald (Pharmaceutical Assessment Manager)
Claire Pouwels (Pharmaceutical Funding Manager)

Apologies:
Rachel Smalley (Deputy Chair)
Deon York
Libby Burgess

1. **Karakia and welcome**
   Opening by the Chair

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**
   Minutes of the previous meeting were approved
   - Moved by: Francesca
   - Seconded by: Trent

3. **Action items**
   Taken as read

4. **Interest register**
   Trent updated his declarations

5. **Scoping future improvements to the current medicines funding application process**

   Members engaged in a constructive discussion on Pharmac's medicine funding application process. They were asked to identify 2 or 3 priority areas for deeper exploration at the in-person meeting scheduled for January 2026.

   Members completed a pre-meeting questionnaire, which identified the potential focus areas:

- Prioritisation and ranking process
- Timeframes and milestones
- Role and function of advisory committees
- Consumer voice and engagement
- International comparisons and best practice

Members emphasised the importance of improving timeframes and transparency within the medicines funding application process. This aligns with the strong focus on these themes at the Valuing Life Medicines Summit. Greater clarity around the process was seen as essential to building trust and understanding among stakeholders.

The establishment of clear milestones was highlighted as a critical area for improvement. Members cautioned against adopting a quick win approach, stressing that short-term improvements proposed under the Reset Programme should complement longer-term strategic changes.

Pharmac staff confirmed that a review of the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) process will be undertaken as part of the four-year improvement programme. However, the scope of this review is still to be defined. Members expressed interest in receiving more detail on this work as it is scoped.

Patient engagement was acknowledged as a valuable component of the decision-making process. Members agreed that consumer voice and engagement should be prioritised and noted that this topic will be further explored in upcoming discussions on the consultation process and embedding lived experience in clinical meetings.

There was consensus that international best practice should inform all aspects of process improvement work. Rather than treating it as a separate item, members felt that existing global solutions should guide Pharmac's improvement work.

Members expressed interest in exploring how clinical advice, consumer and patient expertise, and economic assessment can remain distinct yet integrated. They also discussed the need to clarify the roles of consumers and advisory committees in decision-making.

It was agreed that the focus at the in-person January 2026 meeting would be:
- Timeframes and milestones
- Prioritisation and ranking process
- Role and function of advisory committees.

Moved by: Malcolm
Seconded by: Gerard

It was acknowledged that not all topics may be covered in depth during a single meeting, and further discussions may be required.

Agreed actions:
- Programme Manager to liaise with the Chair to discuss workshop approach for the January in-person meeting.
- Programme team to provide further detail on the HTA review as part of the four-year improvement programme.

6. General business

Members were provided with a copy of the draft vision and strategy notes from the recent working group meeting. These notes are intended to inform the Senior Leadership Team's ongoing work, and members were invited to review and provide feedback.

A draft media release was also shared with members, acknowledging the completion of the first 90-day plan. Members were encouraged to submit their feedback on the release by Thursday, 23 October.

The group discussed the Options for Investment (OFI) list consultation and expressed interest in receiving further information. It was agreed that an update on this topic would be provided at the upcoming consumer hui.

Members discussed if the meeting questionnaire responses could be shared with their networks. Members are invited to give their feedback on this.

Agreed actions:

- Members to email feedback on the vision and strategy notes to the Reset Programme team.
- Members to email feedback on the draft media release to the Reset Programme team by Thursday 23 October.
- Programme Manager to arrange for an update on the OFI list consultation at the upcoming consumer hui.
- Members to email feedback to the Reset Programme team regarding the sharing of the meeting questionnaire responses.

7. Meeting key messages to share

None recorded.

Close of meeting at 3.00pm

Next meeting is 2.00pm – 4.00pm on Thursday 6 November to discuss the consultation process.