

Minutes of the Consumer and Patient Working Group Meeting Thursday 21 May 2026

The meeting was held online from 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

Present:

Malcolm Mulholland (Chair)
Tim Edmonds
Francesca Holloway
Trent Lash
Tracy Tierney
Libby Burgess
Deon York
Gerard Rushton

Reset programme team:

Jannel Fisher (Reset Programme Manager), Sam McCarthy (Reset Programme Project Manager), Becky Littlewood (Reset Programme Coordinator), Ross Henderson (Engagement Lead), Danielle Campbell (Reset Programme Project Manager)

Pharmac staff attendees:

Caro De Luca (Expert Advisory Manager), Ben Campbell-Macdonald (Pharmaceutical Assessment Manager), Melissa Copland (Clinical Lead, Medicines Management), Hannah Burgess (Principal Policy Advisor)

Apologies:

Chris Higgins

1. Karakia and welcome

The meeting was opened by the Chair.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes approved.

Moved by: Libby

Seconded by: Francesca

3. Action items

Action items were noted. Members were advised that outstanding action items are on track for completion by the end of the programme.

4. Interest register

There were no updates to the interest register.

5. Consumer application discussion

Pharmac facilitated a discussion on potential opportunities to improve the consumer funding application process. An overview of the current process was provided, highlighting existing barriers and challenges faced by applicants.

Members questioned the specific gap that consumer applications are intended to address, noting that earlier involvement of consumers through alternative mechanisms may reduce the need for formal applications.

The time commitment and effort required to complete an application were acknowledged, including the strain this places on consumers.

Members also considered international approaches, noting that New Zealand is unique in allowing individual consumers to submit applications.

Opportunities to make incremental improvements to the current process were discussed, alongside broader strategic questions regarding the future of consumer engagement in this space. This included the need for clearer guidance and more structured support to assist consumers in preparing and submitting applications.

6. Application backlog pilot update

Pharmac provided an overview of progress with work to enable faster assessment of low risk, low-cost medicines applications and support backlog reduction. A pilot programme has been completed, with a second pilot planned to further refine the approach.

Members were supportive of the initiative and the focus on reducing the backlog. Discussion centred on how low-cost criteria are applied and the potential for unintended consequences. Members highlighted the need for clear communication, particularly around how proposals are prioritised and decisions are made.

There was also a suggestion that greater transparency on the ranking position of medicines after final decisions are made could help build confidence in the process.

7. Societal impact pilot update

Pharmac gave an overview of the pilot underway to develop societal impact assessments. Members discussed the potential scope and implications of these assessments and shared initial views on the direction of the work, including considerations for how societal impacts could be reflected in future decision-making.

8. Reset Programme evaluation approach

Initial ideas for evaluating the Reset Programme were shared, and feedback was sought from members on both the proposed approach and the measures. Members agreed that the evaluation should be aligned with the recommendations from the 2024 Consumer Engagement Workshop Report.

The Group emphasised that evaluation measures should extend beyond tracking completed actions to assessing the overall impact of the programme. It was noted that this impact should be tested with consumers and patients outside of the working group to ensure a broader and more representative perspective.

The importance of appropriately promoting the Programme's achievements to patient communities and the wider public was also highlighted.

Members also discussed the opportunity to use learnings from the Reset Programme to inform future improvement work.

Agreed actions:

- *Pharmac will share planned promotion of the Programme and its achievements with members prior to release*

9. General business

Pharmac advised that a new Letter of Expectations was being drafted and was expected in late June.

It was noted there are two CAP Working Group meetings remaining before the programme ends. Topics for the upcoming meetings were discussed.

Close of meeting at 4.00pm.

The next meeting is on Thursday 4 June 2.00pm – 4.00pm to discuss the four-year improvement programme, Budget 2026 update, and review of the consumer advisory function.