

Minutes of the Consumer and Patient Working Group Meeting Thursday 29 January 2026

The meeting was held in-person from 9am to 4pm.

Present:

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

Senior Leadership Team:

Natalie McMurtry (Chief Executive), Catherine Epps (Director Medical Devices), David Hughes (Director Advice and Assessment/CMO), Michael Johnson (Director Strategy, Policy and Performance), Nicola Ngawati (Director Equity and Engagement), Maria Robertson (Director Corporate Services), Trevor Simpson (Chief Advisor Māori)

Reset Programme Team:

Jannel Fisher (Reset Programme Manager), Becky Littlewood (Reset Programme Coordinator), Sam McCarthy (Reset Programme Project Manager), Hendrik Furstenau (Reset Programme Contractor)

Process Improvement Foundational Workshop:

Ben Campbell-Macdonald (Manager, Pharmaceutical Assessment), Melissa Copland (Clinical Lead - Medicines Management), Caro De Luca (Manager Expert Advisory), Ryan Perica (External Engagement Manager), Claire Pouwels (Manager, Pharmaceutical Funding)

Consumer Engagement Team:

Ryan Perica (External Engagement Manager), Josh Clark (Principal Advisor Consumer Relations), Neve Hancock (Engagement Coordinator), Sarona Iosefa (Principal Advisor Consumer Relations), Laya Vasudevan (Principal Advisor Consumer Relations)

Karakia and welcome

Opening by the Chair and Pharmac CE

Medicine funding application process improvement foundational workshop

Members took part in a foundational workshop to inform the Medicine Funding Application Process Improvement work. The session focused on gathering consumer and patient perspectives to support future improvement design.

Members discussed the proposed steps and terminology used to describe the current medicine funding application process during a facilitated session that included a Q&A with Pharmac staff. The discussion explored whether the process was clearly explained for patients and consumers, whether any key steps or information were missing, and where terminology could be simplified or made more consistent.

The workshop also covered proposed advice and assessment timeframes. Members considered the shift from “time to fund” to “time to rank” and the use of phased timeframe targets over a 3-year period. Discussion included views on which process milestones matter most to consumers and should be reported publicly.

Finally, members reflected on the core elements of the Pharmac model that should be retained, as well as areas where flexibility or change could improve outcomes for patients and consumers.

Introduction to the Consumer Relations Team

Members were introduced to the new Consumer Relations Team. This team will work alongside Pharmac staff to build and maintain strong, ongoing relationships with consumer and patient groups.

Shaping the future 4-year improvement work programme workshop

Members participated in an interactive workshop focused on shaping the future four-year improvement work programme. The session explored what a future-state assessment and advice system could look like and what matters most to patients and consumers.

Pharmac shared a draft blueprint to support discussion about how the assessment and advice system could be improved over the next four years. The blueprint has been informed by a range of inputs, including the 2022 Pharmac Review, insights from the Valuing Life Summit, 2024 consumer engagement workshops, the 2025 internal culture review, the 2025/26 Letter of Expectations.

Members discussed the draft blueprint from a consumer perspective and shared views on priorities for the future system. Feedback from this session, alongside input from the Consumer Advisory Committee, PTAC, suppliers, Pharmac staff, and other key stakeholders, will help inform the direction recommended to the Pharmac Board at their meeting in March.

Reflection session

Members participated in a reflection session informed by a pre-meeting evaluation survey. The survey was designed to gather feedback at the halfway point of the Reset Programme and to understand what is working well and where improvements could be made.

Overall, members felt the Reset Programme has provided genuine opportunities for the working group to influence decisions and shape solutions. Members noted the programme’s goals, progress, and decisions have been communicated clearly and transparently.

Areas identified for further consideration included seeking a broader diversity of perspectives, refining the use and timing of pre-meeting questionnaires, and reviewing the cadence of meetings.

Members also raised concerns about next steps, including resourcing to continue the work initiated through the Reset Programme and how the transition to the future improvement programme will be managed.

Agreed actions:

- Pre-meeting questionnaire will remain open after meetings to allow members to capture reflections and ideas that may not have been raised during the discussion

Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting minutes were approved.

- Moved by: Rachel
- Seconded by: Chris

Interest register

No new declarations or changes were made.

Close of meeting at 4.10pm.

Next meeting is 2.00pm – 4.00pm on Thursday 12 February to discuss consumer advice framework, including role of CAC future 90-day plan action items.