



## Equity Policy

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### 1. Purpose

Pharmac is committed to achieving equitable health outcomes and sets out our commitment to equity at a strategic level.

This policy sets out our operating context, our role in the wider health sector and recognises that Pharmac has limited direct levers to achieve health equity and must do so by working in strong partnership with other health and public sector agencies as part of achieving the wider Government's health priorities.

### 2. Context

Pharmac plays a critical role in the wider health system by ensuring that people in need have access to the best possible health outcomes from pharmaceutical treatments. This responsibility is a core part of our statutory functions under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 (the Act).

Our role operates within the broader purpose and intent of the Act, which seeks to protect, promote, and improve the health of all New Zealanders, achieve equity in health outcomes among New Zealand's population groups.

Beyond our obligations under the Act, we are also guided by the:

- *Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027 (GPS)* which sets out the Government's priorities for improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders, including those with the greatest needs, as outlined in the New Zealand Health Plan.
- *the 2025/26 Letter of Expectations (LOE)* from the Minister to the Pharmac Board Chair, which outlines expectations across various aspects of our work, and giving effect to the Circular (action 12).

### 3. Principles/policy position

Pharmac demonstrates its commitment to improving health equity by focusing on those with the highest health needs. This includes people living with severe conditions, those experiencing multiple co-morbidities, individuals residing in areas of high deprivation, and those facing overlapping forms of disadvantage.

## 4. Definitions

Pharmac adopts the Ministry of Health definition of Health Equity:

*“In Aotearoa New Zealand, people have differences in health that are not only avoidable but unfair and unjust. Equity recognises different people with different levels of advantage require different approaches and resources to get equitable health outcomes.”<sup>1</sup>*

Pharmac understands equity as recognising that people have different levels of advantage and therefore need tailored approaches and resources to achieve equitable health outcomes. This principle guides both how we serve the public and how we operate as a public organisation.

Externally, this means contributing to improved population health outcomes by prioritising those with the highest health need.

Pharmac remains committed to supporting the Government's health priorities, including the GPS, national health targets and the implementation of the New Zealand Health Plan.

Our work also gives effect to Cabinet Circular (24) 5: *Needs-based service provision*, which outlines the Government's expectations for public services to be targeted, commissioned, and designed based on the needs of all New Zealanders.

## 5. Achieving Equity

Pharmac will achieve health equity in the work we do by:

- At the **strategic level** advancing health equity as described in the Act. This policy centres on genuine engagement with underserved communities including Māori, applying a proactive population health lens to address systemic inequities, and ensuring the needs of those most poorly served are prioritised. This includes embedding health need considerations across all policies and strengthening cross-sector collaboration to support sustained change.

## 6. Our commitments

The following are high-level focus areas and commitments we will undertake externally:

- 6.1. **Embed equity into policy, strategy, and decision-making** across the health system.
- 6.2. **Strengthen partnerships and engagement** with Māori, and other high health needs groups, consumers and patients, underserved communities, and sector stakeholders.
- 6.3. **Improve equitable access and use of medicines, medical devices and vaccines** through collaborative and evidence-based approaches.
- 6.4. **Publicly report and evaluate progress** on equity outcomes and implementation efforts.

## 7. Scope

This policy applies to advisory groups, and the Board. It covers all relevant aspects of Pharmac's business, including how we approach engagement across our work.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.govt.nz/strategies-initiatives/programmes-and-initiatives/equity#:~:text=The%20definition,-This%20is%20the&text=Equity%20recognises%20different%20people%20with,to%20get%20equitable%20health%20outcomes.>

8. Review and publication

Owner(s)	Director Equity & Engagement	Approved by	Board approved
Policy reviewed	20 November 2025	Next Review	November 2026