CONSULTATION

Effective decision making happens when the decision-maker has all the necessary information and has taken into account all the likely impacts of their decisions; this enables robust and well-informed choices. Most New Zealanders are affected by PHARMAC’s funding decisions, so it’s important that we understand your views when we are making choices.

We consult with the public, when we consider it appropriate, about our activities and the decisions we make*. We carefully exercise this discretion to decide when we seek public comment; both in relation to individual funding decisions and other activities. When developing a new policy or considering a funding decision or a change to existing funding, it will often be desirable to carry out a formal, time-bound, public, written consultation exercise. More often than not we formally consult before making our funding decisions.

Consultation can take many forms, and the approach we take may differ from proposal to proposal, depending on the type of work underway. For example, some consultations will be shorter than others, and involve a single round of written submissions to a proposal. Consultation may be targeted to particular groups with a specific interest or specialty. Other consultations will be over longer time periods and have a broader scope, and may include steps such as early engagement with stakeholders in one-to-one meetings to develop ideas or input, public meetings on proposals and seeking feedback at public events such as the PHARMAC Forum. Once a formal submission process is complete, consultation may continue with further interaction with stakeholders to refine proposals in the light of feedback.

Overall, we want to be flexible enough to adapt to the situation at hand, and give stakeholders sufficient opportunity to provide input to proposals.

To ensure PHARMAC has all the information it needs, we encourage you to set out your views, with supporting reasons, when we do consult on a proposal.

WHAT DO WE CONSULT ON?

Activities we consult on can include:

- Whether to fund a new medicine
- Whether to widen or restrict access to an already funded medicine
- Policy changes, such as to our Operating Policies and Procedures
- Major work projects, such as our hospital medical devices national contracting work.

HOW DO WE FORMALLY CONSULT?

We send a proposal to interested parties and invite comments within a deadline. We also usually publish these consultation documents on our website. Sometimes we will issue a discussion document to seek initial views, followed by consultation on a formal proposal once those initial views have been distilled.

For pharmaceutical funding, we usually consult for at least two weeks, though this can be longer depending on the circumstances.

WE SEEK THE VIEWS OF ALL PEOPLE WHO MAY HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL OR WHO MAY BE AFFECTED BY IT TO OBTAIN FEEDBACK ON OUR PROPOSED APPROACH

WHO DO WE CONSULT WITH?

We seek the views of all people who may have an interest in the proposal or who may be affected by it to obtain feedback on our proposed approach.

We welcome all the views we receive, whether from health professionals, the pharmaceutical industry, consumer and patient groups, Government agencies or the general public.

* None of the information in this sheet is intended to create a commitment to consult on anything, to give rise to a duty to consult, or to be relied on as creating expectations that PHARMAC will consult in any particular case. The issues on which PHARMAC decides to consult depend on the circumstances in each case.
HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

We maintain a contact list of people who are interested in our decisions, and anyone can join it.

To be added to this list, send us your name and full contact details (including your role, organisation (if relevant), postal address, email address and/or fax number) and your area of interest at:

PHARMAC
PO Box 10 254
Wellington 6143
New Zealand

Phone (New Zealand): 0800 660 050
Phone (International): +64 4 4604990
Fax: +64 4 460 4995
Email: webmaster@pharmac.govt.nz

Consultation lists are grouped by therapeutic area, for example Mental Health, Diabetes, Respiratory Medicines. You will be sent proposals that relate to the therapeutic areas you have selected.

You can also register via our website (www.pharmac.govt.nz) to receive news feeds (RSS) in the area(s) of interest to you, including consultations. Our website includes information about what we do and the latest developments, such as proposals we are seeking feedback on and committee meeting minutes.

All our consultation documents give instructions on how to provide feedback and the deadline for responses. They also provide contact details for the person at PHARMAC who is responsible for the process, so that you can contact them to discuss any questions you have.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR RESPONSE?

All the submissions we receive are provided to the PHARMAC decision-maker (usually the PHARMAC Board, or Chief Executive acting under delegated authority). We can also meet with interested groups to discuss their views. All the responses we receive are taken into account before decisions are made.

Submissions and feedback received by PHARMAC are subject to the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) and this could mean we are required to publicly release your comments. The OIA allows people to request any information which PHARMAC holds, including public submissions. Unless there are grounds under the Act to withhold the requested information we are obliged to release it.

Sometimes we may also release submissions on our website to assist the public to understand our decision making process. In certain circumstances the OIA allows us to withhold information, including commercially sensitive or personal information.

We point this out in our consultations and ask people if they have particular concerns about the public release of any comments, and to clearly state which comments these are in the submission. We carefully consider this when assessing our obligations under the OIA.