

Engaging with consumers

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PHARMAC always seeks to keep in touch with the community's views on pharmaceutical-related issues and to involve consumers in its work. The Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) is one way PHARMAC ensures it has appropriate processes and plans in place to better understand consumer and patient perspectives, as PHARMAC interacts with consumers in a number of ways.

Considering consumer perspectives

Our work directly affects the lives of New Zealanders so we need to consider the views of consumers and patients.

Consumer engagement

As part of our efforts to continue improving our relationships with consumers, we completed a review of our consumer engagement activities in 2010. This review was recommended under the *Actioning Medicines New Zealand* strategy. We sought to identify where we were doing well with respect to engaging with consumers, where we could do better and what new activities we could undertake to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with health consumers.

In response to this review, and as part of our everyday business, we continue to strive for better engagement with patients and consumers. Examples of activities where PHARMAC is making changes include:

- developing an online Application Tracker where people can search for the funding status of a particular pharmaceutical
- ongoing improvements to the PHARMAC website to make it more accessible, easier to understand and easier to navigate, and provide more opportunity for online two-way engagement
- greater use of 'plain English' in PHARMAC's consultation documents and other communications
- an updated Terms of Reference for the Consumer Advisory Committee to better clarify its role and enable it to provide better consumer advice to PHARMAC.

During consultation on funding and policy issues, we seek out consumer views and often give consumers an opportunity to submit to us face-to-face. We also host consumer groups presenting information about their conditions to PHARMAC staff on an informal basis at lunchtime seminars.

Consumers are also important participants in the PHARMAC Forum, which is held every two years.

Role of the Consumer Advisory Committee

The Consumer Advisory Committee provides input from a consumer or patient perspective on matters related to PHARMAC's activities. Its role is to provide advice to PHARMAC on how we can better seek the views of, and be responsive to, consumers. This advice is sought from the Committee in many different areas, including:

- how PHARMAC can obtain and consider consumers' views on our funding and policy decisions
- PHARMAC's strategy, policy and operational activities related to funding decisions, and access to and optimal use of medicines
- how PHARMAC can best communicate its decisions, policies and strategies
- how the CAC can engage with consumers to ensure it can provide quality advice to PHARMAC
- educational information to assist patients.

The CAC does not provide PHARMAC with advice on medicine funding applications. The Terms of Reference which guide the Committee's activity are available on our website.

The Consumer Advisory Committee can be contacted by email at cac@pharmac.govt.nz, or you can write to the Consumer Advisory Committee at PHARMAC's postal address.

Relationship to PHARMAC

The Consumer Advisory Committee is an advisory committee to the PHARMAC Board. It provides written reports to the Board, and the CAC Chair attends Board meetings as an observer.

Who are its members?

The Committee is made up of people from a range of backgrounds and interests including the health of Māori people, Pacific peoples, older people and patients with chronic diseases, to name a few. For current membership of the Consumer Advisory Committee, visit <http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/CAC>.

Contacting Us

Call us on **0800 66 00 50** (between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday),
Write to us at: **PHARMAC, PO Box 10 254, Wellington** – we respond to all letters
Email us at enquiry@pharmac.govt.nz – we respond to all emails

Information Sheets on various PHARMAC topics are available from our website: www.pharmac.govt.nz/patients/infosheets
If you have specific areas of interest (such as consultations, committees or vacancies), visit our website and subscribe to news feeds in the area(s) of interest to you: <http://pharmac.govt.nz/feeds>