

1 June 2022

Government acceptance of most recommendations from our independent Pharmac Review should lead to more equitable health outcomes for all New Zealanders, and particularly for Māori, Pasifika, disabled people and those with rare disorders, Review Panel chair Sue Chetwin said today.

She welcomed the Government statement Pharmac needed to be more inclusive of people with health needs, that it needed to work more closely with the rest of the health system and importantly it needed to explain its work more openly to the public.

Recommendations from the Panel focused on all aspects of Pharmac's work, from governance, accountability and decision-making to the breadth of its functions and responsibilities.

Ms Chetwin said equity was a key consideration.

The Panel recommended a greater diversity of voices needed to be heard in decision-making including from its Consumer Advisory Committee, its Pharmacology and Therapeutic Advice Committee, the Māori Advisory Rōpū, its various specialist committees and patient/carer representatives.

The Board needed to have stronger oversight of decision-making to assure itself investments were advancing Pharmac's and the Government's objectives.

It also needed to be better at communicating its decisions to the public.

The Government has agreed Pharmac must have a greater focus on building stronger relationships with Māori to honour te Tiriti o Waitangi. It must include consumer advice and lived experiences in many areas of its work and decision-making.

"The Panel welcomed the acceptance by the Minister of the recommendation for the Ministry of Health to lead the development of a rare disorders strategy that would help improve the lives of people with such disorders," said Ms Chetwin.

"The Panel recommended cancer drugs needed to be considered like other pharmaceuticals and did not think a ring-fenced fund would achieve equitable outcomes. But it said Pharmac needed to develop a partnership with Te Aho o Te Kahu (the Cancer Control Agency) with a focus on ensuring equitable access to funded cancer medicines.

"The Panel recommended responsibility for medical device procurement should shift to Health NZ and noted the Government intended to shift big ticket items like MRI scanners to Health NZ in the

short term and review shifting other devices over time once Health NZ was more established. It also noted the direction from the Minister that Pharmac must work closely with Health NZ to promote consistency of health services," said Ms Chetwin.

The Review made 33 recommendations which it believed would result in improvements to the way Pharmac operated and made decisions. They were designed to integrate with the much bigger new Health and Disability System.

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