

Public Health Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Monday 9 October 2023, 10:00am to 4:30pm

Location/platform: Online via Zoom.

Attendees:

PHAC Members: Kevin Hague (Chair), Peter Crampton, Jason Gurney, Beverly Te Huia, Sir Collin Tukuitonga and Ruth Cunningham.

Secretariat: Jonathon Jones and Chloe Reynolds.

Guests: Sidd Mehta, Public Health Agency, Sarah Reader and Pallavi Chhibber from Ministry for Primary Industries, Dr Stella Vickers

Apologies: Sir Collin Tukuitonga and Beverly Te Huia

Opening of meeting

1. Opening karakia by Jason Gurney.
2. Members were asked to update the interest register. No new interests were declared.
3. Members agreed the minutes of the 18 September 2023 meeting were accurate and correct.
4. The PHAC secretariat and chair updated on key activities undertaken since the last meeting.
5. Members noted the release of their position statement on equity, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and Māori health on 21 September 2023 had been picked up and shared by some in the health sector. Along with the pre-arranged news article with Newsroom, an article was also published by New Zealand Doctor. They noted the value of the statement would continue as a foundational piece for the PHAC and for the health system.

6. The secretariat met with the Trans-Tasman food policy team at Ministry for Primary Industries, at their request, as a follow up to the stakeholder workshops.
7. They offered to support the PHAC in the development of its report on food environments and to share their ideas for opportunities that lie within the joint system.
8. The secretariat was invited to join a meeting MPI had arranged with the EU Commission, Director-General SANTE Directorate, the part of the EU system responsible for policy on food safety and health.
9. This group developed the EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices alongside industry stakeholders, NGO's and public health experts. This is one of the first deliverables from the Farm to Fork strategy.
10. The Code contains a set of 7 aspirational objectives as voluntary commitments for action, together with a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress. The EU Commission will consider legislative measures if progress is insufficient.
11. The focus of the Code is sustainability, which carries a broad definition to include social sustainability that encompasses food security and nutrition and public health, making sure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, sustainable food.
12. Members discussed the importance of values framing to enable system change and having the support of The Workshop for their report on food environments.

Actions:

- 18 September 2023 minutes and agenda to be published to PHAC website.
- PHAC to continue to engage with The Workshop in an iterative way through the development of its report on food environments and to get support on framing values.

Food Environments project – Update on PHA insights report

13. The PHAC received an update from Sidd Mehta, Principal Advisor, Public Health Evaluation and Impact on a data and insights report he has been preparing on food environments for the PHAC and Public Health Agency.
14. Sarah Reader and Pallavi Chhibber from Ministry for Primary Industries and Dr Stella Vickers, one of the authors of the Synergia report were also present. They joined this agenda item to share their key messages to the PHAC for consideration as they discussed the structure and content of their report on food environments. The importance of the PHAC's work was highlighted as well as the opportunity to articulate actions the government can take.
15. Sidd highlighted that the Intelligence, Surveillance and Knowledge group in the PHA could undertake a stocktake of local food environment initiative data, applying a social investment lens approach.
16. He noted for food environments, consumption and price data was useful to analyse. This is commercial data, but it can be purchased.
17. For data we collect, there is a gap without a national nutrition survey to understand the diet composition of New Zealanders and how diets have shifted.
18. Kevin noted that addressing the data gaps could be one of the PHAC's recommendations, including strong cross-government collaboration with existing data. Data from a future nutrition survey could be useful to other agencies.
19. Sarah Reader highlighted the impact the food environment has on people's choice, and that current legislation (Food Act 2014) is focused on acute food safety and framed around food borne illness, not on the chronic disease burden of food.

Actions:

- PHAC to use insights from PHA for its food environments report.

Food Environments project – Proposed report structure

20. PHAC Secretariat presented a proposed structure for the PHAC report on food environments. Feedback from members included:
 - i. Tiriti o Waitangi and rights exist now so need to come before the vision

- ii. Systems thinking should be reflected in the recommendations
- iii. Recommendations should be complimentary and cohesive
- iv. Explicit about who has the levers and who is responsible for action, including role of government
- v. Style of report should be concise with points being made efficiently
- vi. Ottawa Charter approach to organise actions: Change environment, empower communities and individual skills.

Actions:

- PHAC Secretariat to re-organise the structure of the report to reflect feedback.

Food Environments project – Deeper dive

21. PHAC secretariat led a deeper dive discussion on topics members may want to feature in the draft report and how they would want recommendations framed. Members discussed:
 - i. land use for growing food
 - ii. funding and supporting local growers
 - iii. support for local communities through local/regional food strategies
 - iv. whānau centred food systems
 - v. cost of food at a local level
 - vi. education and skills around food
 - vii. educational settings as location for support (school lunch programmes)
 - viii. local settings
 - ix. Te ao Māori and food
 - x. creating a supportive environment around communities.

22. They noted that recommendations should identify the interplay between national and local level and take strong systems focus. When talking about children the report should provide the reader a children’s lens to see what a great system is for them.

23. On how their recommendations are framed that noted that:
 - i. recommendation could be presented in a progressive state, building over the period: now, 5 years to 10 years – they are not simply a moment in time.
 - ii. could identify a top five recommendations, i.e. a “best buys” approach.
 - iii. presented by the actor
 - iv. doesn’t have to be a list of actions/bullets but big strategic shifts to enable for rebalance to occur
 - v. noted that focusing on the individual level goes against the purpose of systems change

- vi. they can empower population groups
- vii. industry is often the owner of the determinants
- viii. should be a coherent suite of recommendations.

Food Environments project – Process

24. Secretariat presented a paper outlining key milestones to deliver the PHAC's report on food environments noting the timeline covers the Christmas/New Year period. The milestones set out the process for drafting the report and when drafts would be shared with the PHAC members. A first draft would be shared with the PHAC before its meeting on 14 November and a final draft of the report would be due on 30 November 2023.
25. Members considered a process for peer review. They agreed to engage peer reviewers once the paper was finalised. The review would be a rapid review and sense-check style of review. Feedback could be brought forward to 12 January 2024 and reviewers could provide feedback as they go.
26. PHAC agreed to have 2-3 peer reviewers. It was noted that Synergia offered to look at the report. PHAC agreed it needed a reviewer to bring Māori perspectives and another with a public health communication lens. Someone who hasn't been involved in the project and that can bring fresh eyes.
27. Members discussed how they would break down sections of the report and focus on three major parts of the report:
 - i. Beverly and Peter 1st section
 - ii. Jason and Collin 2nd section
 - iii. Ruth and Kevin for 3rd section
28. Secretariat noted it was setting up a shared file system so that members could access the file in a shared folder.

Actions:

- PHAC chair to approach a small number of people to act as peer reviewers and report back to members.
- Secretariat to set up shared file IT system.
- PHAC members to review sections of their report in first drafting round.

Ministry for Primary Industries

29. Sarah Reader and Pallavi Chhibber from Ministry for Primary Industries presented to the PHAC on New Zealand's food regulatory system as a follow-up from the stakeholder workshops. As participants at the workshops their presentation covered three key points, they had reflected on from the workshops that could help the PHAC with its report on food environments, these were:
 - i. Looking at the food system through the lens of your partner
 - ii. Recalibrating expectations of the food system at a national level
 - iii. Mana-enhancing, collaborative action will be key
30. They explained how the joint food system can help to lead change in domestic system. They noted the four strategic objectives that had recently been agreed by Food Ministers to guide the joint food system and that domestic priorities were to be aligned to these. The objectives allowed for common language across the Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions.
31. On looking at the food system through the lens of your partner, they highlighted that one of the drivers for the current food system is to create higher value foods and that the term value could be explored to expand to the health value of food. A further example is how to view food through the local government lens and identify the barriers of what they are not able to influence their local food system.

Next steps

32. PHAC members to focus on their sections of the draft food environments report and PHAC chair to approach possible peer reviewers.
33. Secretariat noted that the Human Rights Commission had been in touch about a submission for the Universal Period Review of Human Rights.
34. Peter Crampton noted he would be taking a leave of absence for the first part of 2024. He would write formally to the chair.

Next meeting

35. The next PHAC meeting would be held in-person in November 2023, date to be confirmed by email with members.