

Public Health Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Tuesday 26 March 2024, 9:30am to 4:30pm

Location/platform: Ministry of Health, 133 Molesworth Street.

Attendees

PHAC Members: Kevin Hague (Chair), Associate Professor Jason Gurney and Associate Professor Ruth Cunningham

Secretariat: Rebecca O'Connell, Sally Stewart, Anna Jackson and Kima Costelloe

Guests: Steve Barnes (MOH), Derek Senior (MOH), Shareen Ali (MOH), Dr Nicholas Jones (MOH), Dr Andrew Old (MOH) and Ross Bell (MOH)

Apologies: Professor Peter Crampton and Beverly Te Huia.

Opening of meeting

1. Opening karakia by Kevin Hague
2. Members asked to update declarations of interest. No updates were reported.
3. Members agreed the minutes from the Public Health Advisory Committee's (PHAC) meeting on 20 February 2024 were accurate and correct.
4. Ross Bell introduced new members of the Secretariat to the PHAC. The PHAC members welcomed the new Secretariat, and also acknowledged the work of the previous Secretariat.

Actions:

- 20 February 2024 minutes and agenda to be published to PHAC website.

PHAC input into the Government Policy Statement (GPS)

5. The team working on the GPS joined at 10am. Kevin Hague welcomed the GPS team and thanked them for sharing their final draft of the GPS with the PHAC.

6. Derek Senior, Policy Manager in Strategy Policy and Legislation noted that the team were hoping to finalise the GPS by the end of June.
7. Steve Barnes, Group Manager Strategy Policy and Legislation team in Manatū Hauora presented on the final draft of the GPS.
8. Steve Barnes noted that the GPS sits alongside the New Zealand Health Plan, which is being led by Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand. The Health Plan is fully funded, and will be announced when the Budget is delivered at the end of May.
9. PHAC discussed the draft GPS and provided feedback for the team. Members highlighted that the GPS was oriented around personal health services.
10. Steve noted that in parallel to the GPS, the Ministry was developing a strategic monitoring framework for the health system. This had 2 parts – one on services and one on determinants of health.
11. PHAC noted that the GPS should provide a mechanism for influence over determinants of health.
12. Members also noted that investing upstream is important including addressing barriers to primary care.
13. The GPS team welcomed the PHAC to provide a written submission on the GPS.
14. PHAC noted they would like to see the NZ Health Plan, and Steve noted this is being developed by Te Whatu Ora.
15. Steve noted today was his last day in the role, and in future the PHAC could contact Caleb Johnson regarding the GPS.

Actions:

- Secretariat to collate PHAC feedback and send to the PHAC for review and approval.
- Secretariat to follow up with Te Whatu Ora on the New Zealand Health plan.

PHAC Finalisation of its Food Environments Report

16. The PHAC discussed the feedback it had received from expert reviewers, and made decisions on what changes to make in response.

Actions:

- Secretariat to action decisions from the PHAC on changes in response to the external reviewers and to share an updated version with the PHAC.
- Secretariat to arrange external formatting for the final document.

Director of Public Health

17. Dr Nicholas Jones, the Director of Public Health, met with the PHAC. Noting that the Director of Public Health also has a role in advising the Minister of Health and the Director-General of Health, Dr Jones was interested in understanding the PHAC's priorities and sharing his priorities as Director of Public Health.
18. Dr Jones raised his concern about the impact of climate change on public health, and the Chair noted that this was potentially on the PHAC's work programme in the future.
19. The PHAC and Dr Jones also discussed the emerging impacts of digital determinants of health, and that this was also a challenge to health promotion. The PHAC noted they would be specifically scoping this issue in their next report.
20. Dr Jones also raised the issue of occupational health as a topic the PHAC could consider. The Chair noted this was a topic the previous National Health Committee looked at, however this PHAC had limited resources to undertake multiple projects.
21. Dr Jones noted that he would take a memo to the Director-General to ensure that any reporting from his Office as part of his statutory role under s3D of the Health Act 1956 did not overlap with the work of the PHAC.

Round table discussion with Dr Andrew Old

22. Dr Andrew Old met with the PHAC for a round table discussion. The Secretariat stepped out of the meeting for this item.

PHAC Food Environments report – Part 2

23. The PHAC met with Ben Heather, Principal Advisor, External Communications and Engagement, to discuss their communications plan for the release of the food environments report.
24. The Chair noted his preference to release an op-ed about the report, to explain some of the more nuanced narrative of the report and to help frame debate and discussion on the report.
25. Ben Heather noted he would support the PHAC where needed, and would also inform the Ministry media team, who will then interact with the Minister's Press Secretary. The Chair approved of Ben sharing a final copy with the media team.

Actions:

- Ben Heather to draft media release
- Kevin Hague to draft op-ed, with Ben Heather supporting.

PHAC Work Programme for 2024

26. The Chair noted that he has had several conversations with the Minister on their next topic on determinants, and that at their last meeting the Minister also suggested the PHAC could look at how much of New Zealand's health spend was on prevention. It was noted that the Minister had also commissioned the Public Health Agency and possibly Te Whatu Ora to undertake this work, which the chair would need to clarify with the Minister at their next meeting.
27. The Chair noted the Minister previously indicated he would like to meet quarterly with him and needed to follow up with his Private Secretary to ensure those meetings had been set up.
28. Sally Stewart presented on what the PHAC Secretariat had heard so far about the PHAC's intended approach for the determinants piece, and posed some questions to further refine the scope.
29. The Chair noted that the primary audience for this work is the health system, and secondary audiences are sectors beyond health.

30. Ruth Cunningham noted that the scope should be on direction setting for the broader public sector, with recommendations and also to support the narrative around what determinants of health are.
31. The Chair also noted the scope could include how action on the determinants can occur. Noted that current machinery of government does not have good mechanisms to work across sectors.
32. The Chair noted the final product would be something like the National Health Committee's report. The Chair asked for the previous reports to be recirculated with PHAC members.
33. A member stressed the importance of one pen-holder from the beginning, and planning the structure of the report from the beginning.

Actions:

- Secretariat to recirculate earlier NHC reports with PHAC members.

Next steps and actions

34. Ross Bell to follow up with the private secretary on the PHAC appointments process and quarterly meetings with the Chair.
35. Secretariat to refresh fortnightly meetings with Chair.

Next meeting

36. The next PHAC meeting will be held online on Tuesday 23 April 2024.
37. Closing karakia by Kevin Hague.