

## MEMORANDUM FOR PHARMAC BOARD MEETING 27 OCTOBER 2023

**To:** Pharmac Directors  
**From:** Chief Executive  
**Date:** October 2023

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### Response to release of information under the Privacy Act

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

**note** that the chief executive has offered her apology to the Board for unprofessional and unacceptable comments made in internal emails

**note** that the chief executive will provide a verbal explanation at the Board meeting

**accept** the apology and verbal explanation offered by the chief executive

**note** the action plan to be implemented including engaging an external party to assist the senior leadership team and Board with work underway on the culture of Pharmac

**note** that regular updates on the implementation of the action plan will be provided to the Board at future Board meetings

**endorse** the action plan.

#### Purpose

This paper outlines the actions Pharmac will take in response to unprofessional internal emails that were publicly released as part of a Privacy Act request.

#### Background information

Following the release of information to an individual as part of a Privacy Act Request in July 2023, extracts of the information were made public by the individual via the media on 6 October 2023.

The extracts contained unprofessional and unacceptable comments made by some Pharmac senior leaders and a small number of staff in internal emails.

Questions have been raised in media commentary and public discussion about the leadership and culture of the organisation.

The chief executive and senior leadership team take this matter very seriously and are addressing these concerns immediately.

The chief executive and senior leadership team very much regret the comments and wish to sincerely apologise to all parties.

## **Upholding Public Service values**

The Public Service values, as set out in section 16 of the Public Service Act 2020, detail how New Zealand expects public servants to behave to maintain Public Service integrity.

The Public Service values are:

- Impartial - impartial behaviour means treating all people fairly, without personal favour or bias.
- Accountable - accountable behaviour means taking responsibility and answering for work, actions and decisions.
- Trustworthy - trustworthy behaviour means acting with integrity and being open and transparent.
- Respectful - respectful behaviour means treating all people with dignity and compassion and acting with humility.
- Responsive - responsive behaviour means understanding and meeting people's needs and aspirations.

## **Action plan**

In response to the above matter, the actions that Pharmac will take to ensure that as an organisation we uphold the Public Service values are below:

### ***Immediate actions***

- The Board Chair and chief executive will speak to all staff after the October Board meeting about the Board's discussion and the action plan.
- Engage an external party to assist the senior leadership team and the Board with work underway on the culture of Pharmac.
- Update induction for all new staff and external advisors to ensure a stronger focus on our responsibilities as public servants.
- Take immediate steps to ensure staff are familiar with and fully comply with our privacy policy and related materials together with our online privacy statement.

### ***Actions over the next three months***

- Improve engagement with our stakeholders to ensure we are listening to their concerns and responding to them appropriately and in a timely way.
- Increase what information we proactively release that may be of public interest and be more open and transparent.
- Introduce learning modules about the machinery of government, Privacy Act, Official Information Act and Code of Conduct as annual mandatory training for all staff.
- Provide regular updates to the Board on progress against the actions.