

# Public Health Advisory Committee

## Minutes of Meeting

**Meeting:** Monday 17 July, 9:30am to 4:30pm

**Location/platform:** Held in-person at Bolton Hotel Wellington

### **Attendees:**

PHAC Members: Kevin Hague (Chair), Peter Crampton, Jason Gurney, Beverly Te Huia, Sir Collin Tukuitonga and Ruth Cunningham (online for parts of the meeting)

Secretariat: Jonathon Jones and Chloe Reynolds

Guests: Bronwyn Croxson, Hilary Sharpe, Anna Jackson, Danielle Griffioen, Sidd Mehta, Jessica Berentson-Shaw, Julie Fairfield, Dr Stella Vickers and Sarah Andrews

Apologies: None

### **Opening of meeting**

1. Opening karakia by Beverly Te Huia.
2. Members were asked to update the interest register. No new interests were declared.
3. Members agreed the minutes of 20 June 2023 were accurate and correct.
4. The PHAC secretariat and chair updated on key activities undertaken since the last meeting.
5. On 3 July 2023, the PHAC chair met virtually with three academics from the University of Otago, Dunedin. He met with Professor Jim Mann, Professor Sue Crengle and Professor David Skegg. Professor Mann is an expert on food environments. He shared his views on the need for a national food strategy and recommended the approach in Canada. Professor Sue Crengle is a board member of Te Aka Whai Ora and previously served on secretariat of

the former PHAC. The meeting with Professor Skegg was an opportunity to discuss the role of the PHAC and providing independent advice.

6. On 5 July 2023, the PHAC chair attended the Shared Public Health Leadership Group (SPHLG) to share the PHAC's proposed topics for its future work programme. The SPHLG has senior leaders from the Public Health Agency, National Public Health Service and Te Aka Whai Ora. There was general support for the three topics of determinants of health, equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi and climate change.
7. On 7 July 2023, the PHAC secretariat met with Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) as part of a regular meeting series given the PHAC's current work programme on food environments. MPI updated that they have developed an outline for advice they are leading for later in the year on the cross-sector complexities of New Zealand's food system. MPI is also preparing for New Zealand's hosting of the Australia–New Zealand Food Ministers meeting in Wellington on 28 July 2023. PHAC members have been invited to a function as part of the meeting.
8. On 11 July 2023, the PHAC secretariat met with colleagues from the Public Health Agency and academics from the University of Auckland (Dr Sally Mackay and Dr Victoria Egli) and University of Otago (Professor Louise Signal) to discuss evidence and data relating to food environments. The meeting identified areas for collaboration in three areas: identifying data for monitoring food environments overtime, data to illustrate the challenges and opportunities in particular populations or localities, and evidence and insights on policy reform and effectiveness of policy levers.
9. On 13 July 2023, the PHAC chair met with representatives from Te Whatu Ora to receive an update on activities they are undertaking on food environments. They outlined work underway on a national obesity strategy. It was also noted that the Pacific health team in Te Whatu Ora is leading a diabetes action plan in collaboration with Te Aka Whai Ora.
10. Since the PHAC's last meeting, the Human Rights Commissioner had shared a further draft of a paper he was drafting for the PHAC on human rights as they relate to food and health. Overall, PHAC was supportive of the paper as a foundational document to input into their work on food environments.

11. The PHAC discussed options for developing position statements covering equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The work of Manatū Hauora outlined in the secretariat's paper was noted. The key considerations for taking forward work on statements were timing, audience, and purpose. The chair noted that having a position on equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi would be useful and that the PHAC could provide some influence in this space.

**Actions:**

- 20 June 2023 minutes and agenda to be published to PHAC website.
- PHAC agreed to further engage with the Human Rights Commissioner.
- PHAC agreed to invite Deputy Director-General Māori Health, John Whaanga to their meeting in August to discuss developing position statements on equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

### **Manatū Hauora research on fiscal instruments**

12. Bronwyn Croxson, Chief Health Economist at Manatū Hauora met with the PHAC to discuss fiscal measures in the context of food environments. Hilary Sharpe of the Public Health Agency also joined for this agenda item.
13. Bronwyn outlined the fiscal instruments available in the tax system to influence people's food choices. Generally, there were two options, either lowering the cost of healthy food (eg, intervening in the GST system by removing GST) or an excise tax (like with tobacco or alcohol) on unhealthy foods. Other options could include minimum pricing like in Scotland or prohibition on marketing. All interventions would have both intended and unintended consequences.
14. Regarding a sugar tax, she noted the Government's Tax Working Group 2019 report had not recommended a sugar tax. Instead, it recommended the Government develop a clearer articulation of its goals regarding sugar consumption.
15. Manatū Hauora has commissioned an update from the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research of its [2017 report](#) that assessed the evidence for sugar taxes as a fiscal instrument to improve health. The update will be presented to the Minister of Health. Further work is being considered to supplement the update as there is no evidence within this study of equity impacts.

16. The 2017 report concluded that the evidence that sugar taxes improve health outcomes is weak. It explored the evidence relating to countries like Mexico that introduced a sugar tax in 2014. It was noted that there could be a signalling impact of tax resulting in consumer changing their views of the harm of products that are taxed.
17. A PHAC member noted their support for a tax intervention noting at least 100 countries have introduced a tax on unhealthy foods or beverages. Tax intervention is a tool used for tobacco and alcohol. Bronwyn noted that a tax on sugar (for instance) was more complex as it's harder to define what is included and not, there are also many more producers and retailers involved.

**Actions:**

- PHAC to update Bronwyn on findings of stakeholder interviews, particularly those relating to fiscal measures and Bronwyn offered to support the PHAC, where she could, on its advice relating to food environments specifically fiscal measures.

### **The Workshop Narrative Presentation**

18. Jessica Berentson-Shaw and Julie Fairfield from The Workshop presented on the narrative briefing paper produced for the PHAC on rebalancing the food system. Sidd Mehta and Anna Jackson from the Public Health Agency and Danielle Griffioen from Te Aka Whai Ora were invited and joined this agenda item.
19. Jessica provided an overview of The Workshop and how it works to help organisations shift mindsets and narratives for change. While narrative shift is a long game with "windows of opportunity" if an organisation is well set up with strong narratives, change can happen quicker.
20. Shifting the narrative involves amplifying certain helpful narratives and, in some instances, this involves giving people new narratives or stories, which can divert people away from unhelpful shared mindsets or ways of rationalising about an issue.
21. The briefing paper identifies several unhelpful mindsets and narratives in the food system including individualism, consumerism, otherism, modernism and fatalism.

22. The paper suggests three big ideas to shift the narrative: a unified food system, a balanced food system and empowerment. The focus should be on those people open to understanding and persuasion.
23. The frame of the narrative shift should lead with a vision of what is possible and what is trying to be achieved. Then a set of values should be articulated.
24. A PHAC member noted the importance of food to New Zealand's economy and the risks associated of shifting away from this narrative. Jessica shared an example from a food company in the Netherlands that focused on "better not more".

### **Synergia Sense Making Session**

25. Sarah Andrews and Dr Stella Vickers from Synergia held a sense making session with the PHAC following the completion of the qualitative stakeholder interviews. Hilary Sharpe and Sidd Mehta of the Public Health Agency and Danielle Griffioen from Te Aka Whai Ora joined for this agenda item.
26. The purpose of the session was to provide guidance to Synergia for their work producing a final report of the interviews.
27. In total, 57 people were involved in the interview process representing a range of organisations and individual views. In general, interviewees felt the process was a good opportunity to engage with the PHAC, they were willing to share their views and are keen to engage in future phases of work.
28. Emerging themes from the interviews were that the problem and solutions are beyond health, what defines healthy food and taking a te ao Māori lens.
29. On what works and what doesn't work Synergia presented the interview findings from an individual or whānau level (micro) through to a community or local level (meso) and then to a national level involving government and the economy (macro). Interviewees also shared what they would like to see, and this could be expressed as aspirations.
30. The right to healthy food was explored in interviews, including the role of government as a treaty partner. The right to healthy food also surfaced the following elements, including determinants of health, values, structural factors, sustainability and locally led solutions.

**Actions:**

- The PHAC chair noted he would like to hear from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade about any obstacles relating to the use of domestic measures to ensure food gets to New Zealanders and the impact on New Zealand's adherence to trade rules.

**Next steps**

31. The PHAC discussed the sense making session with Synergia and agreed to Synergia's proposed structure of presenting feedback at the micro, meso and macro levels.
32. The PHAC noted that the final framing of its advice should be strengthened based and solutions focused picking up on stakeholders' aspirations.
33. The PHAC reiterated its support for further engagement in September and to proceed with stakeholder workshops.
34. The PHAC agreed to continue work towards developing position statements on equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

**Actions:**

- Secretariat to inform Synergia that PHAC agrees to the micro, meso and macro structure for the final report.

**Next meeting**

35. The next PHAC meeting will be held online on Monday 14 August 2023.
36. Closing karakia by Beverley Te Huia.