



About us

Advance the public interest in the provision of Assistive Technology, that contributes and supports New Zealanders through funding and promotion.

To give the Assistive Technology industry a voice.

To improve the quality of equipment provision and develop alliances with all industry stakeholders.



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PHARMAC

In a recent meeting held at the ACT Office in Newmarket, Ingrid and Chris (on behalf of ATSNZ) discussed the future direction of PHARMAC and the challenges facing the regulation and procurement of medical devices, with Todd Stephenson, MP, ACT Party Whip, Health Spokesperson and the one across PHARMAC.

Here are the highlights from the meeting.

Appointment of Paula Bennett as PHARMAC Board Chair



Paula Bennett has been appointed as the new chair of the PHARMAC board. During the meeting, it was agreed that Bennett would be briefed, and time would be allocated for her to get up to speed with her new role.

Additionally, she will receive a letter of expectations from the Minister of Health, addressing various issues including cultural matters, stakeholder engagement, and emphasising a partnership model with suppliers. It was recognised that the current statutory remit of PHARMAC is narrow, primarily focusing on a fixed budget allocation, and there is a need for modernisation.

Expectations from PHARMAC

PHARMAC will be tasked with 22 specific objectives. There is a shift towards a values-based approach in medical technology. It was suggested that PHARMAC should become the primary interface for medical device interactions over the Health System Catalogue. However, it was also proposed that two product categories could exist, one under PHARMAC and the other for products that can be purchased on a purely procurement basis. The principle of "fit for purpose" was emphasised as paramount.

Separation of Functions within PHARMAC

Currently, PHARMAC handles both value assessment and procurement, with the process being somewhat circular. There was a suggestion to potentially separate these functions or make them more distinct. Furthermore, it was thought a good approach would be to work towards a 30-day rule, allowing expedited processes for products approved by credible regulators in other countries such as the ARTG/FDA etc.

Concerns Raised

There is a challenge amongst suppliers in determining which agency to engage with (e.g. PHARMAC, Health Systems Catalogue, Hospitals etc), creating an undue duplication of workload and regulatory compliance. Compliance requirements come with high costs, and there is uncertainty with a limited blueprint. It was highlighted that greater clarity needs to be provided. We also explored funding avenues such as EGL and their relevant effectiveness should be explored.

Future Steps and Expectations

The focus will be on achieving increased access to medical technology, fostering innovation, and facilitating the introduction of new products. It was agreed to address bureaucracy and decision-making challenges within the Ministry of Health. We highlighted an example of Schedule H and possibly looking to apply a different investment/allocation approach. Further discussions involving industry organisations are needed.

Closing Remarks

Todd requested that Ingrid, Chris, and ATSNZ have a follow-up meeting, with a few representatives to explore the idea of product categorisation, making the process for "lower end" easily procured products to go through a separate system.



Member Focus – C1 South turns 20!

C1 South Ltd was started in July 2004 by an occupational therapist, registered nurse and custom fabricator/designer that have over 80 years of combined experience in the disability field.

The company is managed by Occupational Therapist Tania Bowkett who provides expert advice and a real understanding of client needs, which is reflected in the products sourced for the New Zealand market.

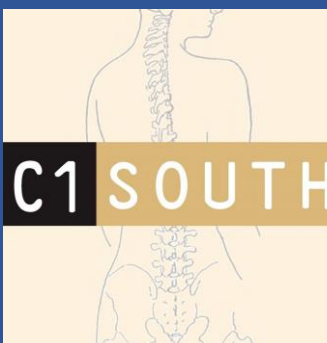
C1 South aim to support therapists, clients and customers by providing wheelchair equipment, products, and services throughout New Zealand that focus on individualised outcomes to promote:

Function - Independence - Choice

C1 South specialises in wheelchair seating and provides a range of quality, innovative products from around the world to promote *function, independence and choice* for people with a disability. They provide the latest solutions and technology 'south' of the 'C1' (the top of the spine) to help improve the quality of life and overall wellbeing for the end user.

C1 South are a founding member of ATSNZ and Tania Bowkett generously gave of her time and expertise on the governing committee for 5 years, supporting the committee as secretary along the way. Tania also managed the seminar programme for our first 4 Expos.

On behalf of ATSNZ members we wish C1 South a wonderful celebration of their first 20 year anniversary!





TECHNICIAN TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION NOW WELL ESTABLISHED

Technicians provide a pivotal role within the Assistive Technology industry here in New Zealand, ensuring equipment is set up correctly, maintained and serviced to meet international requirements. Until recently, from a career perspective there was no education or training programme to endorse their specialised skills and experience in this specific profession.

Thanks to the perseverance of Debbie Wilson from Seating To Go, and the support of Enable New Zealand, Accessable, and ATSNZ, we now have a training programme for Assistive Technology repair technicians here in New Zealand.

Background

Since 2019, this group of organisations have collaborated to utilise the USA/Canada recognised Level 1 & 2 accelerated online learning and DMERT Group certification to ensure NZ technicians are practicing to industry standards, are supported in their training needs, and have the option to be certified and recognised.

Whilst the e-learning modules can be undertaken without a requirement to complete practical exams, the DMERT Group certification does require completion of a practical exam proctored by Level 3 certified technicians.

Back in February 2020, Seating To Go hosted Matt McPherson from Atlas-Fios to run the L1 & 2 practical exams and train our first group of Level 3 proctors from within our 4 stakeholder organisations.

Following this, in early 2023 Online Level 1 and Level 2 DMERT training became available via My Skill - and became open to all funder, subcontractor and supplier technicians to register to complete.

In November 2023, a second round of Level 1 and Level 2 practical exams mentored by Matt McPherson was held at Accessable utilising existing Level 3's to proctor. New Level 3 technician training/exams were undertaken with Matt. As a result, we now have 10 technicians across NZ fully certified to proctor the Level 1 and Level 2 practical exams (4 from STG, 2 from Enable NZ, 1 from Allied Medical and 3 from Accessable), and 3 with a provisional pass!

Going Forward

Following this we are now able to facilitate our own practical exams in New Zealand, but we need to work through the process. Matt still needs to be involved with training and passing Level 3 proctors.

In late July, more in-person training courses will be offered which will allow the new Level 3's to proctor Level 1 and Level 2 exams for the techs who have completed these learning modules. We are also working on training a small group of Level 3 proctors, ideally from the South Island so we have national coverage.

Get your Technicians Trained and Certified

From a supplier's point of view, we have found this training and accreditation programme to be of significant value for our team. Education and skills training is key for all roles and our technicians who have completed this programme. It has also been a positive opportunity to have Technicians from different organisations work together and further grow their own network. We would fully encourage other suppliers to consider this training programme for their own Technicians and contact Jonathan at My Skill to discuss further jonathan.goodwin@myskill.co.nz.

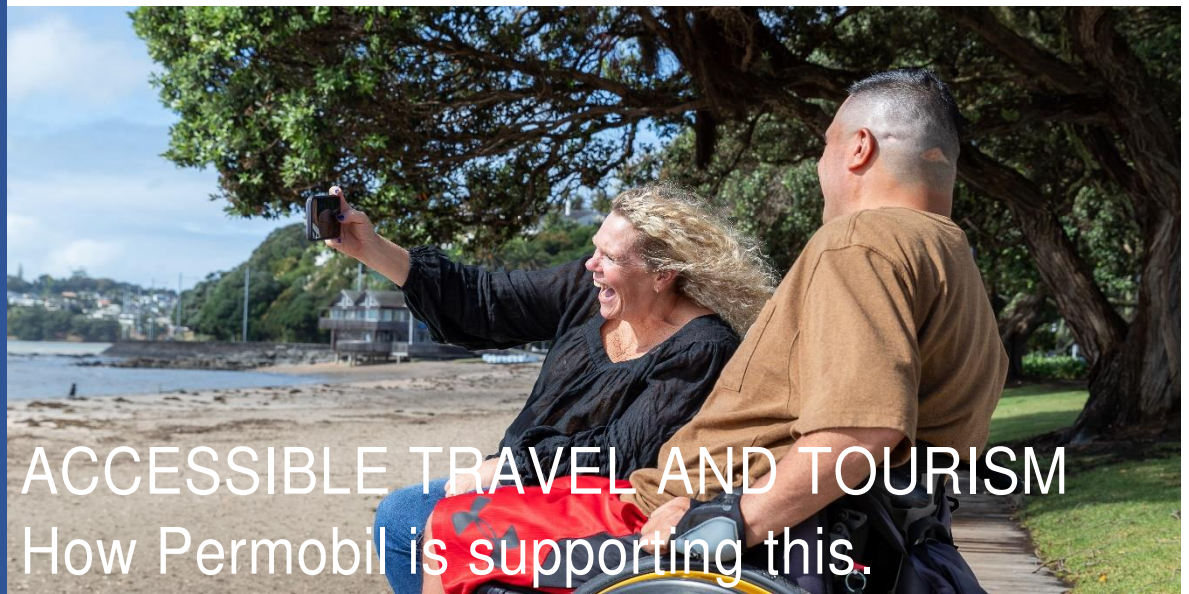
Training and Education Certification Requirements

To help ensure that Technicians can meet the requirements of the DMERT Technician certification, as suppliers we need to ensure that any attendance certificate for training and education sessions include the following:

- Candidate Name
- Course Title
- Instructor/Sponsor Signature
- Course Date(s) and Length/Time
- Number of contact hour (CECs)

It is also preferable to have this available for assessor training sessions as well.

<https://myskill.co.nz>



ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL AND TOURISM

How Permobil is supporting this.

As New Zealanders, we tend to have a passion to travel – even domestically to see our own beautiful motu or internationally, to experience the wonders we see in the movies. However, many of our clients face barriers to travelling with issues appearing where they do not need to.

When travelling, wheelchair users worry about the safety and reliability of their chair to arrive at their destination in one piece. Entrusting your wheelchair to an airline is stressful – and statistics about wheelchairs being damaged in transit are alarming. Imagine arriving at your destination only to find that your wheelchair no longer turns on or has a bent wheel. We see photos of this regularly. And then being left vulnerable while airport staff are unsure what to do, or even move away, is very confronting.

The term "accessible accommodation" is not uniformly defined or monitored, leading to frequent disappointments. Many establishments advertise themselves as accessible, only for users to discover that their powerchair does not fit through doorways or under tables and benches. Many of our clients experience rooms that may be too narrow for users to wheel up beside the bed and transfer over. The height of the bed can also be problematic, making it impossible for some wheelchair users to transfer onto it, forcing them to sleep in their wheelchairs. Bathrooms and showers often present additional challenges, with access widths too narrow or steps still in place.

Even if users manage to get into the shower, controls and showerheads are frequently out of reach from a sitting position. These are but a few of the regular examples we receive regular feedback about.

Another significant barrier in this sector is the lack of training and awareness among staff. Staff members often address the companion of a wheelchair user rather than the user themselves. They may allocate seating in a restaurant without considering the wheelchair user's journey through a crowded room. Ordering a taxi without specifying the need for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle is another common oversight. Despite wheelchair users clearly explaining their needs, they often find that people do not fully listen or understand.

Here at Permobil, we are about he tangata – the people, one of our core values is user first. We provide equipment and advice to ensure that wheelchair users can travel with confidence and ease. When your wheelchair is your only access to the trip planned, any issue or breakage can leave users vulnerable. Whether it's an issue at the airport or a chair breaks partway through a trip, we can assist with an interim chair and work through a solution for the user's own chair. Permobil New Zealand both sells and hires power and manual wheelchairs. We understand the importance of a proper fit, so we do our best to fit a replacement to the user's specifications and deliver it quickly. For example, we have an international client who travels to New Zealand regularly.

Upcoming events

- The Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Conference, Melbourne, 27 August
- Rehacare, 25-28 September, Dusseldorf, Germany.
- Home Care & Rehabilitation Exhibition, 2-4 October, Tokyo, Japan.
- ATSNZ Disability Expo Auckland, 6-7 November, Due Drop Events Centre, Manukau, Auckland.
- Australian Assistive Technology Conference, 6-8 November Goldcoast.
- ATSNZ Disability Expo Christchurch. 20-21 November , Airforce Museum, Christchurch.



She leaves her power wheelchair at home, navigates the airports in a manual chair, and then transitions into a replicated hired powerchair upon arrival, met by one of our team members. No fuss, no stress, and she knows her own chair is safe and ready for her return.

We also offer the rental of medical equipment related to mobility and comfort, including beds and mattresses, hoists and commodes, pressure support, and power assist devices. We can set these up anywhere in New Zealand and collect them when no longer needed. This is often a more cost-effective solution for disabled travellers than packing their own equipment as excess baggage. If there is an issue with any equipment or it's not quite right, we will replace it straight away. Our full range is available on our website under Rental.

Sometimes people do more on a trip than they do in their day-to-day life and may need a power assist device to ensure they can keep up with a group or tour, especially when there is so much to see and do! If they only require it for the duration of the trip, it is better for them to hire a device rather than buy it. We offer that flexibility to ensure users can fully enjoy their travels.

Permobil New Zealand's goal is to ensure users do not have their travel plans disrupted or negatively affected by events or issues that can occur when moving around domestically or internationally.

Our team offers advice and works through queries with users and their support crew. If we don't know the answers, we'll find someone who does! We provide travel support and advice on our website and update it regularly.

By addressing these barriers, Permobil is paving the way for a more inclusive and accessible travel experience for wheelchair users, allowing them to explore the world with greater ease and confidence.

If a company or accommodation provider would like to connect with us to consider or discuss how they can develop their accessibility offering or to offer initiatives to benefit our disabled community, we would love to hear from them. We recently had a hotel hire a manual chair from us for a week. They put their staff in it for half a day each to move around the hotel and understand where challenges existed and where they could do more. Another company hired a chair and a power assist device to go through their nature track, videoing it to show it can be done. We are available to be contacted for ideas, connections and support.

More information, including travel tips and tourism support brochures in various languages can be found at <https://www.permobil.com/en-nz/travel-support>