

19 May 2026

David Robinson
Via email: fyi-request-34400-d934db6a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe David

Request for information: Medicines original packaging

Your request was partially transferred from Ministry of Health to Pharmac under section 14 of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) for information relating to how many medicines were imported where the original package writing wasn't in English.

You requested:

Provide information on how many medicines were imported where the original package writing wasn't in English, which languages they were in, and what steps Ministry took to ensure the provenance of the medicines.

When managing a medicine supply issue, Pharmac may arrange alternative medicines where the original packaging is not in English. Wherever possible, alternative medicines are supplied with English-labelled packaging. However, in some instances this is not feasible, and a medicine with non-English labelling may be the only option to ensure continued access to treatment. In these cases, supporting information in English is provided alongside the medicine.

Suppliers also provide supporting information that gives assurance about where the medicine is manufactured. In some instances, the alternative medicine is identical to the product approved for use in New Zealand but labelled for another country.

Information on the number of medicines funded by Pharmac where the original packaging is not in English would require substantial collation and research. This information is not held in a way that is readily identifiable for relevant medicines or stored in a single location from which it can be easily retrieved. Rather, it would require a manual review across multiple records and supply notices. As such, providing this information would require significant staff time and would unreasonably interfere with Pharmac's operations. Accordingly, we are declining this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. We would be happy to work with you to refine the scope of your request so that it can be met in a way that does not require substantial collation or research.

Information about medicine supply issues is publicly available on the Pharmac website (<https://www.pharmac.govt.nz/medicine-funding-and-supply/medicine-notices>). Where an alternative medicine differs in appearance, including where it has non-English labelling, this will be noted in the relevant supply notice. Additional information to support prescribers, pharmacists, and patients is also provided as needed for each supply issue.

Please note, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman about our response to your OIA, under section 28(3) of the OIA. Details of [how to make a complaint](#) are on the Ombudsman's website.

To make information more freely available, we publish selected OIA responses (excluding personal details) on our website. Please get in touch with us if you have any questions about this.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ngawati', with a small flourish at the end.

Nicola Ngawati
Director
Equity and Engagement