

MEDIA RELEASE

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**NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCT BILL'S PLUSES BY FAR OUTWEIGH MINUSES:
INDUSTRY BODY CONCERNED AT ATTEMPTS TO DERAIL IT**

The industry umbrella group for New Zealand's natural products manufacturers and marketers says consumers stand to lose in the long run if erroneous claims about the Natural Health and Supplementary Products (NH&SP) Bill end up stalling its progress.

Natural Products NZ (NPNZ)'s Executive Director Alison Quesnel says its members welcome the new legislation because it will better protect consumers and support exports. NPNZ represents more than 140 local natural products, functional foods, complementary medicines, cosmeceuticals and nutraceuticals businesses.

Once the NH&SP Act comes fully into force, it will regulate the manufacturing and selling of natural health products in this country and provide much stronger guidance around which ingredients and health benefit claims will be permitted / not permitted, and what product information must be provided.

"It is an important piece of legislation, which we believe will benefit consumers, the natural health and supplementary products industry and New Zealand as a whole," says Ms Quesnel. "We feel that the Ministry of Health has bent over backwards to consult all interested parties so as to ensure that the legislation is workable from an industry and consumer perspective. It has therefore been disappointing to learn of considerable scare-mongering and misinformation from some quarters who claim that consumers will no longer be able to access many natural products."

There is - and will continue to be - a process for adding additional ingredients to the Approved Ingredients List, which involves a full evaluation by an expert subcommittee including industry experts. This list currently includes more than 5500 ingredients and by the time the Bill comes into effect is expected to reach well over 7500.

More.../2

Natural Health and Supplementary Products Bill / 2

The NH&SP Bill has spent more than a decade in the pipeline and Natural Products NZ is frustrated by erroneous claims that consumers will lose access to any ingredient not already listed in the Approved Ingredient List when the Bill is passed.

Ms Quesnel says the Ministry of Health has done a great job of accommodating industry, natural health practitioner and the publics' needs by extending the current consultation period for the regulations. Furthermore, the Government has indicated it will establish a subcommittee comprising industry, practitioner and academic expertise in natural health products, to evaluate the safety and suitability of proposed new additions.

Recent amendments to the draft bill have further supported consumer choice by allowing health practitioners to prescribe, dispense and/or administer natural health products or formulations that they deem appropriate to clients in the context of a one-to-one consultation – even if those ingredients are not included in the Approved Ingredients List. This is in line with provisions in the current Medicines Act (1981).

“This exemption is designed to allow practitioners to utilise ingredients that, like certain pharmaceutical products, may not be suitable for ‘over the counter’ consumer purchase but can safety be taken under close health practitioner guidance,” says Ms Quesnel.

This type of exemption has been successfully applied for many years in other countries.

Ms Quesnel says NPNZ hopes the Bill will soon pass into law: “The new regulation is timely due to consumers’ growing demand for alternative options to maintain health and assist disease prevention.

More.../3

Natural Health and Supplementary Products Bill / 3

“Local and global consumer demand is accelerating so New Zealand therefore needs a modern regulatory environment that recognises consumers’ right to information about natural health products and their functions, and the right to access products that are safe and effective,” says Ms Quesnel.

The new regulations will do this by providing all parties with a higher level of assurance that the natural health and supplementary products available here are safe, approved, effective and contain what is stated on the label.

Increased transparency means that consumers will also be able to find out more about the products they are buying and to therefore become better informed about how best to use them.

“The new regulations will make it far more difficult for questionable products to be marketed and sold here we are greatly looking forward to the Act coming fully into force as soon as possible,” says Ms Quesnel.

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Natural Products New Zealand (NPNZ) is a national industry organisation representing this country’s natural products, functional foods, complementary medicines, cosmeceuticals and nutraceuticals industries within New Zealand and internationally.

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