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NATURAL HEALTH ALLIANCE



**The bitter pill** of economic ties with Australia

**GP horrified** at Government's health strategy

**Running out of time**  
by Allison Roe

# Can New Zealand Blackcurrants improve your eyesight, protect your brain and help slow the aging process?

Berry Berry good for you? New studies have backed up years of anecdotal evidence and suggest that daily consumption of blackcurrants could significantly protect your brain, improve your vision, lessen eye strain or eye fatigue and help you see better in the dark!



This could signal potential hope to millions of people who struggle with eye problems, brought on largely by computers, television watching and video games. Visual problems are also associated with the normal ageing process.

## Study shows great eyesight improvement and less eye fatigue

A study undertaken by Researchers at the University of Tsukuba, Tokyo<sup>1</sup> tested the effects of blackcurrant anthocyanins on humans. Tests were done on the ability of the eyes to adjust to darkness and eyestrain caused by computer screen usage. There was significant improvement by the subjects who consumed 50mg of blackcurrant anthocyanins.

## Blackcurrants also help with ageing problems

The effects of ageing can also cause circulatory problems within the eye. Blackcurrant extracts provide antioxidant protection to microcapillaries circulation therefore helping to prevent damage and possibly delaying the onset of circulatory problems within the eye. A patented study conducted in the United States claims that blackcurrant extract activates the brain and central nervous system in human beings and improves brain function of both healthy and elderly people. **Blackcurrants may also be beneficial in the possible prevention and alleviation of neurodegenerative disease associated with reduced cerebral performance, such as Parkinson's disease, dementia and mood disorders<sup>2</sup>.**

## Blackcurrant anthocyanins are the magic component

The most beneficial and valuable part of blackcurrants are anthocyanins (an-tho-cy-a-nins). Anthocyanins are a particularly strong, protective antioxidant which is responsible for the purple/blue colour of the fruit. Many berry fruits show a high antioxidant activity, however in a comparative test it was the humble blackcurrant which showed the highest antioxidant activity, being the richest in both anthocyanins and polyphenols<sup>3</sup>.

*This article is included in the interests of consumer health education and is not intended to imply that such ingredients have been approved under the Medicines Act for the prevention or treatment of specific diseases or medical conditions. Individual Results will vary. The results quoted in early trials may need to be confirmed by further studies. Evaluation under the Medicines Act has not been undertaken. You should seek appropriate Healthcare professional advice for more serious medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, dementia and mood disorders. If symptoms continue you should also seek appropriate Healthcare professional advice.*

## My eyesight has really improved...

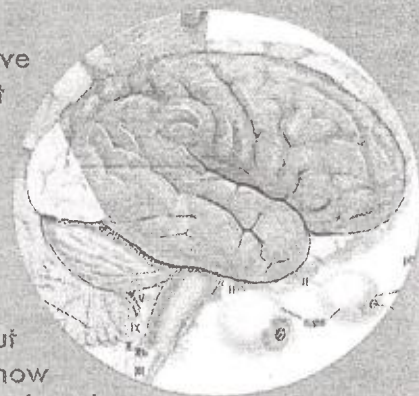
*"I have been wearing glasses for the past 18 months, because of short-sightedness. Since wearing glasses, my eyes may occasionally feel dry, irritated and fatigued. I have been taking a blackcurrant extract pill (with over 50mg of anthocyanins) for the past 2 months and have noticed a real difference in the way my eyes feel. Objects seem a lot clearer and brighter when I don't wear my glasses. Sometimes now I feel like I can leave my glasses off for the day and my eyes don't strain as much and get so tired. I have also found that the whites of my eyes look whiter and brighter. In just 2 months, my vision has improved and my eyes feel a whole lot healthier. However I do still need my glasses, which have not been replaced." Jolene, Blenheim, NZ, April 2007.*

## NZ Blackcurrants are a superfood

A wonderful array of nutrients are packed into such a small parcel, they contain no fat, are low in calories and are bursting with minerals and antioxidants. They also have the added benefit of a very low glycaemic index which makes them the perfect choice for anyone wanting to lose weight and those, including diabetics, who need to keep blood sugar levels stable.

## NZ Blackcurrants are the best in the world

New Zealand grown blackcurrants have also been tested against blackcurrant varieties grown in other parts of the world. It was found that the berries grown here are up to three times higher in anthocyanins than other varieties. In the Second World War, pilots consumed blackcurrants to help their eyesight. People knew they were good for you, but they did not know why. Research has now shown that it is the anthocyanins and polyphenols contained in blackcurrants that may well be responsible for the health benefits. To experience some of the benefits afforded in the studies above, you will need to consume over 20 fresh NZ blackcurrants daily or choose a blackcurrant extract with a high anthocyanin content. A breakfast of blackcurrant jam on toast will not have the same effect.



For more information see your local Health Store or Pharmacy

References: 1. Nakaishi H, Matsumoto H, Tominaga S, Hirayama M. Effects of blackcurrant anthocyanoside intake on dark adaptation and VDT work-induced transient refractive alteration in healthy humans. *Alternative Medicine Review* 2000 Dec;5(6):553-562. 2. Bormann J. et al. 1993. Cerebral-activating extract. United States Patent 5,262,162. 3. Costantino L, Albasini A, Rastelli G, Benvenuti S. Activity of polyphenolic crude extracts as scavengers of superoxide radicals and inhibitors of xanthine oxidase. *Planta Med.* 1992 Aug;58(4) 342-4



# Introduction

The Natural Health Alliance is a New Zealand-based organisation. It is challenging the New Zealand Government on its proposal to allow Australia to influence the regulation of New Zealand's natural health products. This will be the result if a proposed bill called the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill is passed in parliament.

The organisation is an alliance of various health associations and research centres\*. They have used the image of the koru in their logo to promote the idea of a new beginning for New Zealand's health industry. They have also embraced the unusual symbol of a red umbrella from one of the Alliance's international members called Health Freedom. The umbrella honours the nine protestors who turned the Canadian Government's health system on its head in a similar battle in 2004.

The nine protestors were among 3,000 Canadians who used a high-potency vitamin and mineral supplement called Empowerplus to help them control the symptoms of manic depression. As part of the Canadian Government adopting a similar regulation to that adopted in Australia and proposed for New Zealand, this supplement was, among others, banned. According to the Canadians they were re-directed to pharmaceutical products that were markedly less effective. On June 11, 2003, to protest their loss of

choice the nine went to the Canadian parliament. As placards were banned they stood silently outside parliament holding red umbrellas. Once their story became known they attracted the support of many of the MPs, the movement gained momentum, won further public support and the campaigners won their battle. Empowerplus is now available again.

The Natural Health Alliance is adopting red umbrellas as part of its campaign, representing courage, defiance and victory in the face of government-imposed health legislation – which the Alliance claim is influenced by pharmaceutical corporations.

The Alliance is firmly opposed to the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill believing it will be "disastrous for the health of all New Zealanders."

Members of the Natural Health Alliance have supplied the content in this supplement; if you are concerned about this issue you would be wise to contact your local MP to discuss your concerns.

*\*The Natural Health Alliance is an incorporated organisation that includes: Health Freedom, New Zealand Charter of Health Practitioners, The New Zealand Health Trust, IM Health, qualified and practicing doctors, pharmacists, herbalists and concerned citizens.*

## How Health Freedom can help you

By Nicola Grace

Health Freedom is an international grassroots movement that works to protect people's rights to health choices and freedom of access to alternative and integrative health.

The Health Freedom movement reached New Zealand when the Australian regulator – the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) – looked to expand its authority to our shores.

The past 10 years have seen the natural health industry grow and natural health products are starting to compete with products from

pharmaceutical companies.

Health Freedom is about ensuring the wellness paradigm. Health Freedom NZ believes the Australian system our Government seems eager to adopt would be a disaster for the natural health products industry.

Health Freedom works to raise public awareness of the issues that threaten the New Zealand public's right to access natural health products at reasonable costs and also threaten our indigenous industry.

Health Freedom believes that since the natural health business is such a growth industry for our country – with huge potential

for export and the ability to attract businesses here – that a Natural Health Ministry should be established by the Government.

If you want to maintain your unrestricted access to natural products, if you believe in the benefits of natural health products and would like to see balance in the advice we receive from healthcare professionals, please support our campaign.

See: [www.healthfreedom.org.nz](http://www.healthfreedom.org.nz) or phone: (09) 414 5501.

health freedom



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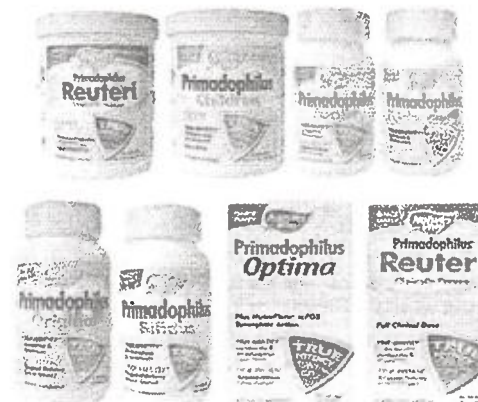
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HEALTH FREEDOM

# Warning from across the ditch

Anamika Vasil discovers how Australian firms battled to survive under the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

The woman who used to be in charge of enforcing Australia's controversial regime for controlling natural health products is now warning New Zealand of the dangers of going down the same regulatory path.

Val Johanson is a former manager in the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which ushered new regulations more than 15 years ago. After leaving her job, she worked closely with the industry for 10 years. Her experiences with the impact of the regime have led her to issue a grave warning.

Many New Zealanders use natural health supplements to look after their health and wellbeing. A nutrition survey done by New Zealand's Health Ministry in 1997 found that 60 per cent of New Zealanders take natural health products with nearly 50 per cent consuming them daily. It is estimated that about 70 per cent of New Zealanders now consume these products.

Since the TGA came into force Johanson has seen Australians lose access to many vitamin, mineral and herb supplements, products that she says have a track record of being extremely low-risk.

New Zealanders need to wake up to the Australian experience

under the TGA, which has placed natural health and wellness products under the same regulatory umbrella as pharmaceuticals, says Johanson.

"This move stems from a health policy – also existing in New Zealand – that is based on treating a disease rather than optimising people's health."

Since the regime was introduced, the costs for businesses operating in the Australian health and wellness industry have escalated and many small businesses have closed down, she says.

Among the casualties was Solgar Vitamin and Herb, one of the world's leading and oldest manufacturers of quality nutritional supplements, distributing more than 450 products in more than 30 countries. After six years battling to survive under the TGA regime, Solgar shut its Australian operation.

Even one of Australia's home-grown industry leaders, Blackmores, has said it now faces an annual bill of \$2 million in compliance costs.

Increased compliance costs have led to price rises and fewer products available, with many products going off the shelf. Consumers are importing products for their own personal use because they can't get them in Australia and businesses are struggling to

compete internationally.

Smaller businesses are finding it hard to get manufacturers to do small batch runs and even the big brand names are getting their products manufactured in India or China as a more cost-effective option.

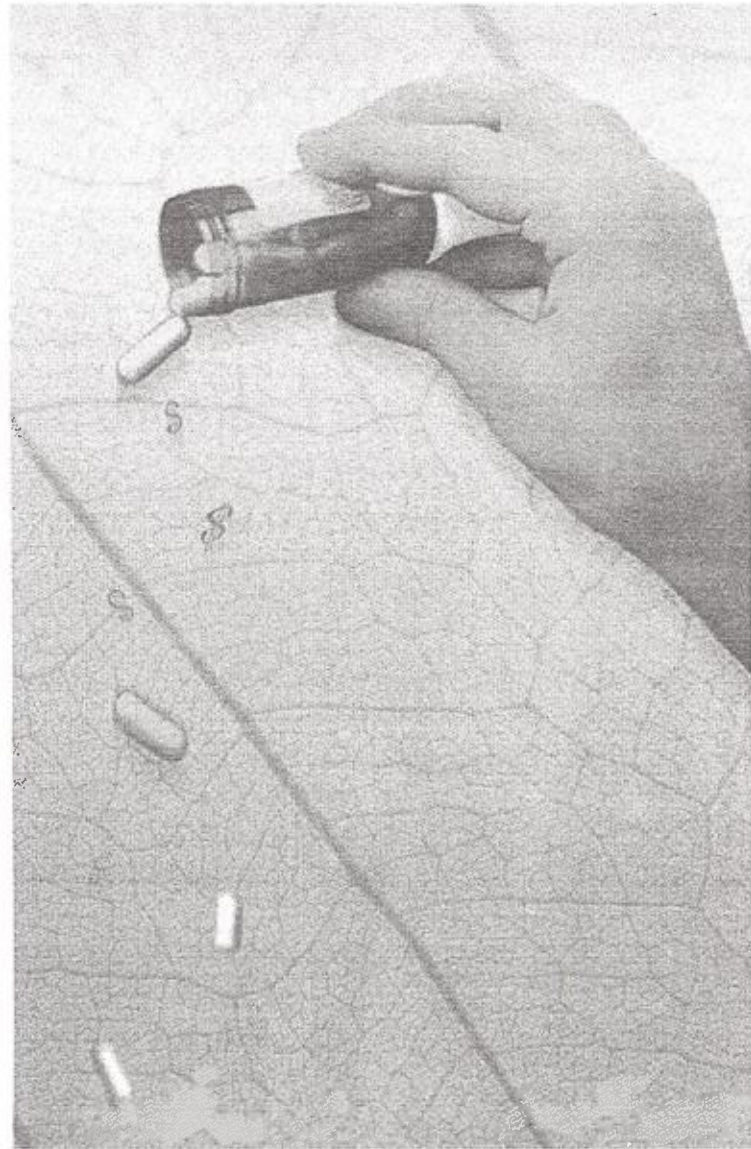
The regulations are stifling innovation in the industry, with a lack of new products being released. "The Australian market is becoming stagnant with many look-alike products under different brand names," says Johansen.

She says if New Zealand goes along with the Australian regulatory model it will lose a golden opportunity to develop a world-class regulatory model for low-risk natural health products.

"This would create a sustainable and innovative natural health industry that makes a major contribution to the economy."

These products do need to be regulated but not under a pharmaceutical system, she says.

"The challenge for the Government is to create an environment in which consumers can enjoy freedom of choice coupled with access to good information to assist them take greater responsibility for their own health and wellness."



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**NORDIC NATURALS**

# GP horrified at Government's health strategy

Dr Paul Butler calls for a public debate over the Therapeutics and Medicines Bill, saying it is designed to help Australia and not the people of New Zealand.

Hippocrates is the father of modern medicine and is quoted as saying; 'let food be thy medicine and medicine thy food'.

New Zealand's scientists, doctors and businesses are shaping a uniquely Kiwi knowledge economy based on this ageless wisdom. This builds on New Zealand's strongest economic foundation – our primary production export icons including dairy, meat and horticulture. Using our strong

dairy farmers. In time this will stall our economy if it remains dependent on commodities.

A natural health product's knowledge economy is a smart way forward. It provides an elegant way through these economic nightmares, making the problem the solution. An effective New Zealand natural health product adds export value to commodities above the line and reduces domestic health expenditure

and other parts of the country. New Zealand's natural health products add value to our health tourism and tourists will become ambassadors for our natural health products in their home markets.

Traditional Maori medicine includes unique and effective natural health products. These will become more available for the health benefit of all New Zealanders and will contribute to exports and health tourism.

An innovative kiwi regulator has the opportunity to focus on consumer markets such as 'baby boomers' and LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability). Providing empowering information on natural health products and services targeting these health markets will establish New Zealand as global leader. LOHAS eagerly seek natural health products and roughly represent 30% of consumers in Japan, Asia and the western

wishes into law. It's planned to be reported back for a Parliamentary vote this month. This would see the regulation of our medications, our medical devices and our natural health products pass to a non publicly accountable offshore agency whose priority is Australian trade rather than New Zealand's public health or the future of our economy.

The lack of public interest safeguards in this Bill means that



*It is clear we need our own regulator to guarantee New Zealand's unique health brand and also our strong reputation for being creative and trustable.*

biological science infrastructure, we are well placed to develop the knowledge of health benefits that add value to these products.

Discovery of these health benefits transforms a commodity into a value-added natural health product, creating the export icons of the future with exotic names such as nutraceuticals, nutrigenomics, bioactives and functional foods.

Our Manuka honey has demonstrated that even Britain's National Health Service is a customer for our natural health products with their recent purchase of Manuka honey wound dressings.

The current government's annual health expenditure is \$10 billion or 20 per cent of its budget. With an aging population this figure is expanding unsustainably at 8.5 per cent a year. In addition further billions of dollars are being spent on 'illness' in welfare and prisons.

The natural limitations that productive land and water place on continued growth of commodity production is already being felt by

below the line.

The degradation of our natural resources, environmental pollution, modern diets and a more sedentary lifestyle all contribute to an epidemic of environmental and lifestyle-driven disease in New Zealand and indeed globally, which pharmaceuticals and surgery alone are unable to control.

As doctors we know that central to New Zealanders' health and wellbeing is the health of the environment and our lifestyle choices; clean air and water, fresh and healthy food and regular exercise.

Our world-leading natural health products are being designed to prevent illness by correcting nutritional imbalances and removing environmental poisons. This provides hope for doctors who are struggling to cope with increasing illness, a lack of funds from current health budgets and rising public concern about incurable disease and illness caused by medical treatments.

New Zealand has entered the health tourism market with health spas being developed in Rotorua

If New Zealand earns its livelihood from the production and sale of natural health products and associated health tourism, it will have both the economic strength and motivation to become the 'pure, clean, green paradise' we market ourselves as, and the world expects us to be.

Health is the new frontier, a frontier we must explore for the future of the world's environment and its people. Who better than New Zealand to pioneer this future?

For the first time our two main export earners – primary production and tourism – share the same critical path: New Zealand's health future. This means that the vision for a healthy environment, healthy people and a healthy economy are dependent on health policy.

It is clear that to secure and maintain the status of world leaders in the international health and wellness markets we need our own regulator to guarantee New Zealand's unique health brand and also our strong reputation for being creative and trustable.

world. In the United States alone this segment represents 50 million people and an annual market place of 228 billion U.S. dollars.

Just as we begin to see this positive way forward for New Zealand we are hearing of a threat that could derail our future.

Australia is demanding that New Zealand cede its sovereign control of health regulation. Australia's current regulation of health – products the Therapeutic Goods Administration or TGA – has seen many natural health products become unavailable to the Australian people, reducing their health freedom and the choices available to their doctors seeking to provide them with the best health care.

From studying how the TGA regulator has operated for more than 10 years, it is clear that an Australian-dominated regulator would strangle our natural health products leadership and our health knowledge economy.

New Zealand Parliament is presently considering a Bill, the Therapeutics and Medicines Bill 2006, designed to pass Australia's

there is nothing to protect New Zealanders from its profound effect on our freedom to access safe and effective therapeutic products for our families and ourselves.

The far-reaching implications of this Bill on the public and the national interest – demands nothing less than a nationwide debate. Every New Zealander must be given the opportunity to have a say about this proposed legislation.

*Written by Dr Paul Butler. A Fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners who has his own practice in Milford.*

*Paclitaxol is the biggest-selling anti-cancer drug in the world. It was first extracted from the bark of the Pacific yew tree.*

HEALTH FREEDOM

# Better than a sugar pill

Daniel King expresses his opinion in relation to the science of supplements vs drugs. Daniel has a background in environmental science.



When people think of dietary supplements compared with pharmaceutical drugs, they often believe that drugs are significantly more effective. But is this justified? What exactly are the requirements to be met before does a drug goes to market?

Former editor-in-chief of the New England Journal of Medicine, Dr Marcia Angel writes in her book *'The Truth About Drug Companies'* that to have a new drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration, the FDA, it just needs to be 'effective' this means better than nothing at all: better than a sugar pill or placebo. Drug companies do not have to show that a new drug is *more effective than* (or even as effective as) an existing treatment. And this is exactly what they do. In their clinical trials they often compare their new substance with a sugar pill rather than the best drug currently available on the market.

If dietary supplements were judged by the same standards as pharmaceutical drugs - ie they work better than sugar pills - many doctors would view them as a first course of treatment. There are many studies demonstrating the efficacy of different supplements. At least five favourable Omega 3 studies were published in the last three months alone. The key difference

between dietary supplement studies and drug industry studies is that of independence. Governments and universities conduct most of the research into supplements, and therefore these are truly independent. Drug company studies are in-house affairs and are at risk of being biased. A 2005 study published in the prestigious journal 'Nature' reported that of a survey of 3247 industry scientists, 20 per cent admitted changing the methodology, design or results due to pressure from the organisation paying for the study. Another 2003 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association reported similar results.

Unfortunately this lack of independent research can lead to patients being prescribed drugs that are not the best drug for their condition as well as unsafe drugs being released onto the market. Doctors do not always have the time or resources to carry out independent research into the best treatments or safety so they are largely kept up to date by drug industry reps.

The most notable example of an unsafe drug is Vioxx, which was approved by the FDA in 1999 according to the VioxxConsumerGuide.com. In Oct 2004 the Wall Street Journal reported that the arthritis drug was estimated to have caused "more than 27,000

heart attacks and sudden cardiac deaths before it was pulled from the market".

There are many useful pharmaceuticals on the market, but until independent drug safety research is carried out before the drugs come to market it simply makes sense to try the lowest risk approach first.

Arthritis sufferers know that supplements such as glucosamine can offer relief from the pain. Scientific research aside, the mere fact people continue to buy this month after month - unsubsidised - indicates it works. The safety record of supplements is hard to fault. Many are simply concentrated extracts from our food supply, therefore we often have safety data going back decades or even further

People take supplements for anecdotal, cultural and preventative reasons. Claims made by supplement companies are 'soft' such as 'may support joint mobility' rather than hard claims such as 'clinically proven to relieve the symptoms of arthritis', yet the research these soft claims are based on is often at least as valid as drug company research. It also has the added credibility of independence.

Perhaps educating doctors as to the latest research into natural health products would be a good first

step in moving towards a wellness paradigm. Rather than resorting to powerful drugs as a first course of treatment for every ailment, a closer look at supplements for non-acute cases would be a safer and much less expensive option, especially for a small country facing a future pharmaceutical bill we will be unable to afford.

*References:*

The Truth About Drug Companies; How They Deceive Us And What To Do About It, Marcia Angell, MD, Former Editor of the New England Journal of Medicine

Scientists Behaving Badly, B.C. Martinson, M.S. Anderson, and R. de Vries, Nature 435 (2005): 737-38

Association of Funding and Conclusions in Randomized Drug Trials: a Reflection of Treatment Effect or Adverse Events? Als Nielsen B, Chen W, Gluud C, Kjaergard LL.: JAMA. 2003 Aug 20; 290(7):921-8

*"Most people do not consume an optimal amount of all vitamins by diet alone. It appears prudent for all adults to take vitamin supplements."*

- Source: The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).



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# Running out of time

from Allison Roe

Allison Roe won both the New York and Boston Marathons in 1981 establishing herself as one of the world's best long-distance runners. Today she campaigns for better health and fitness among New Zealanders. Here she talks about how our wellness industry should be protected from Australian control.

Long ago this land was a shining island oasis, clad with unique plant life and towering trees echoing the chorus of a thousand bird species. An oasis, a dream, an Eden of possibilities.

What has that ancient time to do with modern New Zealand? It gives us our heritage, a DNA encoded into the land and into all who come to live on its shores. It means our birthright is to live in Eden and to speak of those possibilities to a world hungry for that message. Never more is that message more meaningful than in the health and wellness debate. And never has the timing of that discussion been more critical than now.

New Zealand has become one of the last bastions to hold out against the global march of international food standards code Codex Alimentarius. As much as Codex's derivative in this part of the world – the Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Authority (ANZTPA) – talks about public safety, that is not the only force at play. Pharmaceutical companies, like all businesses, lobby governments because they want to protect their interests.

Natural medicines – safe and cost-effective vitamins, minerals,

herbs, aromatherapy, ayurvedic and other medicines – give consumers access to natural tools to become and stay well.

For the past six months I've become deeply involved in this issue. I've talked to countless doctors, scientists, health practitioners, vitamin manufacturers and consumers. I've read endless scientific and economic data and become deeply changed by all I've heard and read.

I've done this because I'm a mother, an athlete, someone who believes in health for all – and because, like those I've spoken with, I want to ensure good health will be there for my children's children and those who come after.

I ask everyone who reads this article to remember who you are, to remember where you live and to think of the future that you want for this land and those people of your own families to come.

In the Annual Prime Minister's Statement for 2007, Helen Clarke said; "I believe that in the years to come the pride we take in our quest for sustainability will define our nation." In rejecting the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill the Government will advance this quest. It will send

a strong global message that New Zealand supports the development of natural and sustainable products.

I believe it is New Zealand's time to shine, to offer the rest of the world a blueprint - the reality of a new future. Sounding an emphatic 'No' to all the overt and subtle layers of power and persuasion brought into play to protect an industry's profits. To instead shine out a vision of a wellness economy. A place where that which is natural and in rhythm with the Earth thrives and is honoured. A country where the best of science, the best of medicine and the best of holistic therapies work together to offer health solutions which are effective, healing, affordable and available to all.

## Want to Help?

March in Auckland this Saturday

Date: Saturday, 16th June

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Contact: protest@healthfreedom.co.nz

Phone: 377 2850



Former marathon runner Allison Roe.



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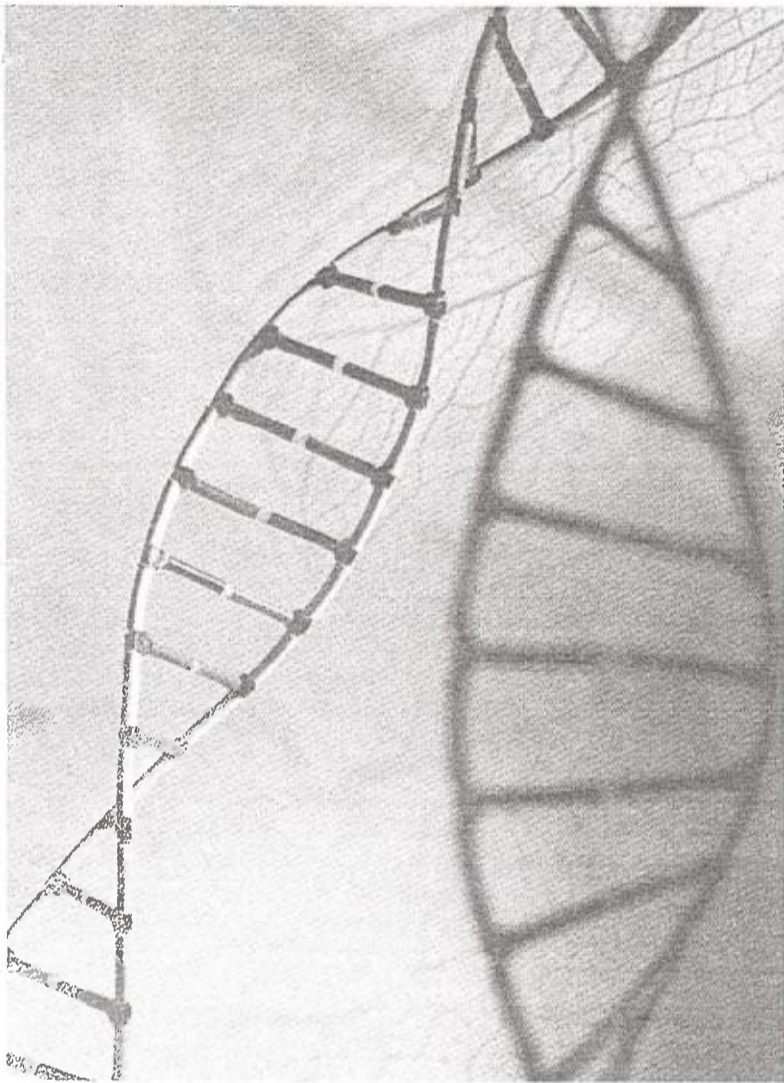
**www.ceres.co.nz**

HEALTH FREEDOM

# Less for more

by Colin Middleton

Colin Middleton says the burden of registration costs from the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill will increase costs of natural health products and decrease consumer options.



In Australia the department that administers the medicines law and which also encompasses natural health products is the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

This organisation is attempting to influence and control ASEAN countries' regulators of medicines and natural health products.

Increasing requirements, irrespective of the true risk to consumers, only increases costs.

This has had the effect in Australia to either cause natural product manufacturers to either move offshore or reduce or curtail expansion.

Increasing requirements and costs to keep the TGA going are now distributed over fewer remaining products and companies. An Australian TGA consultant says the TGA has been forced to increase its fees every year as fewer sponsors are listing fewer products.

This year the Australian TGA listing fees went up by more than 25 per cent. This makes our Labour Government/ Medsafe's proposed five-year 50 per cent subsidy on fees a waste of time and money.

Medsafe, New Zealand's equivalent of TGA, has already increased registration costs and requirements for NZ medicine

products to soften further increases when full ANZTPA implementation takes effect.

The Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill gives the ANZTPA, which will be controlled mainly from Australia, almost unbridled power and puts in place a fines structure that is unjustifiable in relation to the risks that natural health products pose.

Instead, a new sovereign Natural Health Products regulatory body, run by New Zealanders for New Zealanders, would help to create an environment to rekindle research and development. It could cover biotechnology, soil science, horticulture, dairy, pharmacology, clinical trials, manufacturing technology, physics, chemistry, mathematics as well as many other related fields. This regulatory body could administer natural health products at a level appropriate to their risk.

Appropriate regulation would enable Maori and our diverse multicultural population to share and develop natural health products for the benefit of all. Above all, it would give local and overseas consumers trust and confidence in natural health products manufactured in New Zealand at an affordable cost.

All the work and knowledge we

have contributed to and paid for must be handed over promptly to a new regulatory team. New Zealand must now cancel the treaty and bill to enable a new regulatory model to be developed that will stay in New Zealand.

*Colin Middleton is the founder of NatureSource Organics NZ.*

## Want to Help?

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*"Green tea consumption is associated with reduced mortality due to all causes and due to cardiovascular disease but not with reduced mortality due to cancer." - Source: Journal of the American Medical Association, (JAMA) September 13, 2006)*

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# The bitter pill of economic ties with Australia

by Amy Adams, lawyer

Lawyer Amy Adams warns that if the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill is passed then ordinary New Zealanders will miss out on using thousands of products.



No matter how the Government tries to sell the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill, if it passes, New Zealanders will face losing access to what could be thousands of safe and effective natural supplements.

More than 62 per cent of New Zealanders regularly use natural health products such as multi-vitamins. Increasingly we are looking first to natural ways to keep ourselves well.

But instead of the Government taking an active role in exploring how such products could help, this bill would see it hand over all rights to an Australian agency to act as the trans-

tasman regulator. Our Government wouldn't make the rules, this agency would. We won't even know what those rules will be when MPs vote on this bill.

Yes, the agency will be figure-headed by the Australian and New Zealand Ministers of Health. But so what? What is clear is that the proposed agency (ANZTPA) would be applying the same style of rules that has seen the Australian natural products industry crippled over the past 15 years.

No ingredient could be sold unless the agency allowed it – innovation will be stifled, if not killed

outright. Generations of knowledge of drug-free alternatives could be lost and businesses selling safe and effective products will be driven out of business.

There are at least 700 ingredients commonly sold in New Zealand that Australia doesn't allow. But the bigger threat to consumer choice comes from the costs of complying with the regime that would see many New Zealand products lost – not because of any safety issues but solely because of the compliance costs.

Don't be fooled by the Government hype on this one – opponents to the bill are not arguing about ensuring public safety and or about whether natural products should be regulated. Of course they must be.

But quality control and restrictions on what claims products can make can all be achieved in New Zealand under a sensible system of rules, designed specifically for natural products, and at a far lower cost than what the Government proposes.

While the Government dismisses opponents of the bill, what it can't dispute is that this proposal has been rejected by Parliament's health select committees on two previous occasions – and for good reason. This proposal is not in the best

interest of New Zealand businesses or people.

There is no justification for treating natural products as drugs. The risk profile and economics of the two industries couldn't be more different and yet the Government and Medsafe appear determined to force our vitamins under this Australian drugs regulator.

The Government has tried to argue that this bill is necessary to facilitate trade with Australia under the guise of having a closer economic relationship. But this relationship has never meant that we should be compelled to do something so clearly against our best interests and which would make our industries internationally less competitive.

The Government should ask itself what is the good of reducing trade barriers with Australia if it will destroy our ability to trade competitively in other markets. The only reason ANZTPA is needed to open up trans-tasman trade is because the Aussies are insisting we do it their way.

The bitter pill of economic ties with Australia will leave a ghastly taste for future generations of New Zealanders. By the time many of us come to realise just how much this bill would impinge upon our basic

human right to look after our own health, many of our choices would already have been lost forever.

*Amy Adams is a Christchurch lawyer and legal adviser to the New Zealand Health Trust.*

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HEALTH FREEDOM

# Recommendations from the UK

by Robert Verkerk

Robert Verkerk is head of the Alliance for Natural Health – an international, European-based alliance of natural health interests including consumers, medical doctors, health practitioners, lawyers, scientists and companies. Britain's Alliance for Natural Health has been deeply engaged in assessing the impact of different regulatory regimes for natural health products in different parts of the world. Its take on New Zealand's proposed Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill is that:

- Increasingly stringent regulatory regimes are rarely, if ever, developed because of conclusive evidence of risk from use of natural health products.
- Pharmaceutical-based regulatory models impose requirements which are incompatible with many natural products that are comprised of many different primary or active molecular forms.
- Such regulatory models provide a greater regulatory burden for smaller companies and favour large trans-national corporations over local New Zealand businesses which leads to a lack of diversity and innovation in the marketplace.
- New Zealand has the ability to lead the world with a regulatory model that is adapted specifically to the requirements of natural health products.

- If NZ designed its own system, such a model would provide an important precedent for other countries that are contemplating development of their own regulatory model.

- To achieve such a model means that existing plans of the Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Authority (ANZTPA) are disbanded and that the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill is rejected in its present form. This Bill should be limited to conventional pharmaceutical products and medical devices.

- If the New Zealand Government is to embrace preventative health strategies, which would greatly benefit its population and reduce the burden on its health service, all effort should be made to ensure that unnecessary, disproportionate regulatory burdens are not applied to natural health products, but rather make them accessible to as wide a sector of the population as possible.

- By embracing a disproportionate, pharmaceutically based legislative system for natural health products on the basis of insufficient evidence, the New Zealand Government may open itself to potential legal action by New Zealand businesses that are damaged by the new law.

- The New Zealand Government should recognize that there are many differences between the Australian

natural products market and that of New Zealand. The New Zealand market has always fostered a much greater diversity of natural product suppliers than the Australian market and would be much more negatively impacted by the proposed bill.

- We would be very happy to help assemble an international expert panel as a means of providing advice to the New Zealand Government on a new regulatory approach, which would seek to enhance the development of a competitive, robust, New Zealand natural products industry, both nationally and internationally.

Robert Verkerk says: "Judging by the level of concern among New Zealand consumers, about which we have been aware for some time, it goes without saying that trans-tasman harmonization of natural products laws would be likely to be a deeply unpopular political move."

Visit [www.anhcampaign.org](http://www.anhcampaign.org) to view Judi Dench presenting 'When We Become Silent.'

*Manuka honey is registered as a medical wound dressing product in the UK. It has a CE mark and is funded under the NHF.*



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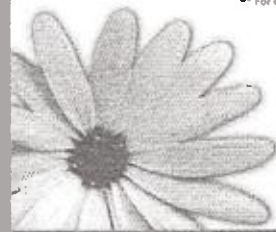
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# By Kiwis for Kiwis

Dave Sloan, founder of the New Zealand Health Trust, tells Anamika Vasil of a regulatory system that he says would be more beneficial to Kiwi families and New Zealand's health industry than the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill.

Natural healthcare products are neither foods nor medicines and should be regulated according to their low risk profile, says the New Zealand Health Trust Founder Dave Sloan.

"These products featuring natural ingredients – including vitamins, minerals and herbs – have different issues to be addressed, work in different ways and have significantly different risk profiles than over-the-counter pharmaceutical medications," he says.

By contrast, he says the proposed Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill would apply the same level of compliance costs and manufacturing and testing requirements to low-risk dietary supplements as high-risk pharmaceutical medicines.

Sloan says this approach is unnecessary, overly-regulatory and runs counter to basic principles of common sense.

"Forcing dietary supplements to be regulated within a pharmaceutical regime is unwarranted and impractical and there is no evidence that any better consumer protection is achieved as a result," he says.

Another reason the New Zealand Health Trust is opposed to the Bill, says Sloan, is that the legislation is likely to result in New Zealand adopting Australian regulations without the same accountability as a New Zealand-controlled body would have.

He argues that while regulation of natural health products is required to ensure product safety, appropriate quality manufacturing, clear labelling and restrictions to any beneficial claims made, these controls should reflect the distinct nature of such products.

Adopting the Australian system here, says Sloan, means New Zealand will miss out on the opportunity to come up with its own regulatory model, one that supports the viability of the industry, to encourage innovation and increase consumer choice, knowledge and understanding.

"So New Zealanders can take more responsibility for their own health and wellbeing," says Sloan.

Such a New Zealand-based regulatory model would also meet public safety and consumer protection issues without placing an unnecessary and unjustified compliance burden on the natural health industry, says Sloan.

Such a model was proposed by the Parliamentary Health Select Committee in its report to Parliament in 2003. The committee's recommendations included:

- The most appropriate way of governing complementary healthcare products is through the strengthening of domestic regulation.

- An independent risk assessment of complementary healthcare products should be

commissioned before promoting a long-term regulatory solution.

- Any system of regulation treats complementary healthcare products distinctly from both medicines and food.

- A small to medium business impact assessment should be applied to any model of regulation.

- That any system of regulation of complementary healthcare products should be based on a negative list of restricted or prohibited ingredients.

The Trust has endorsed the Health Select Committee's recommendations and is calling for the Bill to be rejected on the basis of these recommendations.

According to Sloan, under such a regulatory model, prohibited products or dosages could continue to be controlled through a list of restricted or limited ingredients and with clear and accountable procedures for ingredients to be added to the list.

Sloan says the basic principle applying here is one of "innocent until proven guilty" – that all ingredients be considered safe until proven unsafe, as opposed to the Australian regulatory model, which deems everything is unsafe until proven safe.

"Many of these products and their ingredients have been in use for thousands of years," says Sloan.

The majority of New Zealand's natural health sector produces small batch runs, so the Bill would impose unsustainable production costs on it.

These costs are more acceptable to companies with large batch runs that can spread the costs over a larger volume of product.

"The smaller companies will be decimated while the large companies will pick over the corpses and do very nicely thank you," Sloan says. "That's neither fair nor a sensible outcome for New Zealand."

The Trust's model would also require licencing of all manufacturers, importers and suppliers of dietary supplements in New Zealand and they would have to meet appropriate and good manufacturing standards.

For further information visit [www.nzhealthtrust.co.nz](http://www.nzhealthtrust.co.nz)

## What is the New Zealand Health Trust?

The trust is an educational charitable organisation with a mission to monitor health issues and raise awareness about consumers' health options. It was founded by Dave Sloan.

The trust has conducted research on how dietary supplements are regulated in New Zealand and has come up with an alternative regulatory model, which is both detailed and follows consultations with the industry.

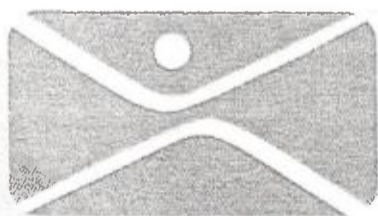
It is calling for a new self-governing natural health products regulatory body to be established, run by New Zealanders for New Zealanders. This regulatory body would need to be accountable to the Government, the natural health industry and the public and would administer such products in a way that is appropriate to the level of risk they pose.

The trust wants the regulatory body be set up as a separate business unit and staffed with people qualified and experienced in the natural health field as distinct from those with pharmaceutical backgrounds and pre-conceptions.

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**Email:** [protest@healthfreedom.co.nz](mailto:protest@healthfreedom.co.nz)

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