23rd September, 2003

Dear Practitioner / Industry Supplier,

We would like to introduce ourself by presenting a brief history to you. We are known as the Natural Health Care Alliance (NHCA)

Last October 2002, the NSW Health Minister, Craig Knowles, announced the formation of the Health Claims and Consumer Protection Advisory Committee (HCCPAC). The Committee was to start a “crackdown on ‘miracle cures’, ‘wonder drugs’ and misleading health claims and advertisements”, he said.

He went on to say that "up to $2 billion is spent in Australia on alternative health products and procedures, many of which have not been scientifically tested or proved." and that the Minister wanted other States to follow the NSW lead.

Considerable concern arose in the natural and complementary healthcare (NACH) industry from the Minister's press release, especially with the selection of Professor John Dwyer as the Chair. Professor Dwyer has been a vocal and public critic of NACH over the past decade.

A small group of concerned industry and association members came together to form a response group and what followed was as remarkable as it was effective. The Minister and NSW Parliamentarians were inundated with protest letters from practitioners and public alike, as the broad body of the NACH community came together in unprecedented unity to put their case to the Minister and NSW Health.

This unified response, the strength of the representation, and the reasonableness of the demands of the industry were all critical to the success in preventing a 'witch-hunt' of NACH products and practitioners, and were a critical factor in making the HCCPAC transparent and representative.

It was during these negotiations that the Office of the NSW Minister for Health made it clear that they were looking for an umbrella group representing the natural health care practitioners to be a contact point on matters relating to natural healthcare. It became apparent that the group, which had been representing NACH, had possibilities far beyond the particular issue of the HCCPAC.

**CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS OF THE NHCA**

In the past two months, this fledgling group now known as the Natural Health Care Alliance (NHCA) has moved to establish this valuable liaison on a more formal basis.

We are now keen to continue to work together to promote natural healthcare as a critical element in optimising health and preventing disease for all Australians.

The NHCA is now seeking to identify and involve all the major players in the broad NACH industry in Australia to help in defining its role and structure.
**NHCA PLANNED OBJECTIVES:**

- to promote natural health care (NHC) in Australia in a positive and professional light and protect the uniqueness and diversity of NHC within the framework of evidence based medicine (EBM)
- to provide a single and recognisable contact point for media, regulators and Government on all issues relating to NHC
- to educate media, government bodies, the orthodox medical industry and the public about NHC as a sustainable and affordable way of improving the health of all Australians
- to establish positive working links with relevant regulatory bodies
- to lobby government at all levels to influence national health policy by incorporating NHC
- to promote the safe use and practice of NHC with the focus remaining on patient wellbeing

Some of the information in this document is drawn from an article by Mark Donohoe originally commissioned by Bioceuticals (www.fit.net.au) for inclusion in their magazine, FxMed.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

We are contacting ALL practitioner groups, suppliers, and individuals who may wish to be part of this united action, and may not be aware of our existence. We see it as an unprecedented opportunity for the entire industry, to have a body that is perceived and operates as one voice, to have an umbrella group that provides a first point of contact for government, regulators, media and others.

We do however really wish to stress that it is very important to note that the formation of this group is an ALLIANCE representing ALL members of natural and complimentary health care right across Australia.

The NHCA does not seek to replace your individual Associations, but rather, act as a co-ordinator to refer queries and issues to the right body for action or response.

May we suggest to all practitioners and associated industry that they contact their appropriate associations and urge them to support the NHCA initiative.

**THE INITIAL PLAN**

As part of the first stage of developing this alliance, it was agreed that the NHCA should initially embark upon a three-month media campaign. The initial thrust, organised by Wilkinson Media, would be to counter adverse publicity resulting from amongst others, the Pan recall, and get some ultra positive stories about the value and benefits of natural healthcare out in the marketplace.

Wilkinson Media have produced a good plan, and have excellent links with the most popular television, radio and print media in Australia. We will be seeking stories and expertise from NHCA member organisations to assist them.

The initial founding members of the NHCA have pledged $1500 per association or business represented, and we have also received some smaller amounts from non-represented individual practitioners. We are happy to accept any donation, large or small!!

We want to be inclusive, and trust that each will contribute to the best of their ability, and all will be acknowledged unless otherwise requested in accordance with the Privacy Act.
The NHCA is now registered as a **Not for Profit Association** and everything is legally in place to accept contributions. We need your money now, and we ask you to forward this immediately, as our campaign needs to start yesterday!

We have in place an account with the St George Bank, Crows Nest and donations can be made to the **NHCA PO Box 296 Cremorne NSW 2090** A tax invoice will be forwarded shortly thereafter.

A basic website has been created, which will post information as it comes to hand. Come visit us at [www.nhca.com.au](http://www.nhca.com.au) and watch us grow, and follow the developments!!

Please feel free to contact us via email on admin@nhca.com.au or write to us with your comments and suggestions  **NHCA PO Box 296 Cremorne NSW Australia**

We are awaiting a dedicated 1300 number and will post it on the website as soon as it is available.

**We urge you to spread the word amongst your colleagues, and feel free to share this information far and wide.**

September is Natural Healthcare Month, and we want the Wilkinson Media program to be up and running by the end of it. Our aim is to create a **positive, high profile** for the **entire Natural Health Care** industry and keep the momentum of public awareness rolling, through to the end of the year and beyond.

More Australians need to be using complementary healthcare as their first choice, and we aim to make that happen, with benefits for everyone involved in this project.

With best wishes,

**The Steering Committee of the NHCA**

Dr Mark Donohoe, Daniel Baden (TMS & Vitasearch), Rod Brennan (Nature Care College, ATMS Board), Russell Norden (Journal of Complementary Medicine), Dr Karen Bridgman, Val Johanson (CHC), Patricia Reed RN

Other Interested Parties:

Susan Dean, Shi Zong Zeng, Dr Sandra Cabot, Samantha King, Rodney Roberts, Robyn Chuter, Raymond Khoury, Pauline Rose, Nutrition Care Pharmaceuticals Pty. Ltd., Nigel Pollard, Megan Matthews, Maurice Finkel, Marie Fawcett, Professor Marc Cohen, Justin Lovelock, Judy James, Jennie Burke, Jamie Parker, Iggy Soosay, Emmanuel Varipatis, Don Benjamin, Bob Grace, Basil Roufogalis, Avni Sali, ASOMT, Andrew Pengelly, ACNEM, AACMA, Ruth Leighton, Kathy McKewin, Dr Giselle Cook, Dr Joachim Fluhrer, Dr Ian Brighhope, Peter Torokfalvy, Jo Clarke.