



*Better health for New Zealanders through the development of responsible self-medication*

July 20, 2009

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Concern over medicines containing codeine needs to be kept in perspective**

The New Zealand Self-Medication Industry (NZSMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products, says that concern over the use of medicines containing codeine needs to be kept in perspective.

Executive director of NZSMI, Tim Roper says that OTC pain relievers, cough and cold medicines combined with codeine have a long history of safe use when used according to label instructions and many thousands of New Zealanders have benefited from them.

“The medicines play an important role in relieving mild to strong pain, and cough and cold symptoms,” he comments.

He says in relation to the issue of separation, there is no substantive evidence of codeine being diverted for non-complying use so any further inquiry into this aspect would seem to be of academic interest only.

“It is important, when considering this issue that we strike a balance between the activities of a small minority who may recklessly abuse the product, and the thousands of consumers who use it responsibly and safely,” he says.

NZSMI agrees that healthcare professionals should maintain a high degree of awareness about people buying large quantities or repeated purchases.

“We believe there is already a high level of regulation appropriate to the product’s efficacy and safety profile. They can only be sold in a pharmacy, and the sale of higher strengths and larger packs generally also requires personal intervention by a pharmacist,” he maintains.

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About SMI: The New Zealand Self-Medication Industry Association Inc (SMI) is the national trade association representing manufacturers, marketers and distributors of a wide range of products, generally available "over-the-counter" (OTC) and mainly for use in self-medication by New Zealand consumers. SMI’s mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all New Zealanders at a reasonable cost. SMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy.

**Media contacts: Tim Roper, Executive Director NZSMI Tel 09 235 5260 Mobile 021 992 113 or Brenda Saunders, 021 777 171/09 536 6753**

**New Zealand Self-Medication Industry Association Inc.**  
PO Box 6473, Auckland, New Zealand Phone/Fax (09) 235 5260  
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