

**For Immediate Release**

## **RED UMBRELLA VIGIL TAKES 'ANTI-VITAMIN BILL' PROTEST TO PARLIAMENT TOMORROW**

**Protesters share their stories with MPs and warn Parliament about bill's impact on health consumers' rights**

**Monday, May 14 2007** -- Tomorrow (Tuesday May 15) marks the start of the Red Umbrella Vigil on Parliament as protests gear up against the proposed Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill.

A group of natural health advocates have travelled from Auckland to Wellington to hold the vigil and present their personal stories to MPs. They will be carrying red umbrellas rain or shine in honour of a group of Canadian women who launched a similar consumer health awareness campaign in 2003. (For more information on this campaign visit [www.theredumbrellas.com](http://www.theredumbrellas.com))

The vigil will be held from 12-2pm. At 1pm, the protesters will be joined by MPs including Sue Kedgley of the Green Party and National's health spokesman, Tony Ryall. The vigil continues on Wednesday, May 15 from 12-2pm, with other supporters joining in.

Nationwide protest organiser and cancer survivor, Nicola Grace, will be amongst the men and women who will present their story of recovery using natural health products, which she says may be outlawed or rise steeply in price if the Bill is legislated.

Having survived Leukemia in her early 30's and now in her 40s, Nicola faces the challenge of overcoming stage four melanoma diagnosed in August last year when she had a tumor removed from her leg.

### **Excerpts from Nicola Grace's Story**

"I was diagnosed with Leukemia in my early thirties and given six months to live...I really had nowhere else to turn but to the world of natural health," she says. "That choice was not an easy one to make as I was living in Australia at the time, not long after the Therapeutic

Goods Administration (TGA) had begun to impose its heavy-handed regulatory system on natural health products.

"I took high dosages of ... [dietary supplements], which I had to import from either New Zealand or America. The reason I had to import these nutritional supplements was because the TGA had made some of those supplements illegal and many of those remaining legal were in too smaller doses to give me the nutritional saturation I needed to feed my depleted body's cells. I was spending around \$AU500 per month in supplements and shipping. Eventually I had to leave Australia and go to the United States so I could have the freedom and ease to complete my recovery my chosen way.

"Having had personal experience of losing access to the type of dietary supplements I needed to get well, under the TGA system, I do not want to see that happen in my country" she says.

"If a trans-Tasman agency is formed as a result of the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill... it will without doubt affect the length of time I have live."

### **The Significance of the Red Umbrellas**

Another participant in tomorrow's vigil is a woman currently taking Empower Plus, a high potency vitamin and mineral supplement that has become synonymous with red umbrellas in Canada.

Nicola Grace says a group of nine courageous women using Empower Plus staged a silent vigil on the steps of the Canadian parliament with their red umbrellas. This was in response to Health Canada (a similar regulator to the proposed Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Authority) determining that because Empower Plus was effective against Bipolar Affective Disorder (also known as manic depression), it would be treated as a drug. Health Canada then took steps to restrict access to Empower Plus by turning shipments back at the US border.

She says while the women gained support from many MPs of the Canadian parliament it was through a court case that it was highlighted how Health Canada was no longer accountable to parliament or indeed Canadian law. In the case, Health Canada took the suppliers of Empower Plus to court for refusing to comply with its ban on Empower Plus.

Nicola Grace says the Canadian judge ruled in favor of the suppliers, granting them the “defense of necessity” and stated that Health Canada’s rules for regulation were in conflict with much more important laws regarding the preservation of life. Empower Plus, however, remains an illegal drug in Canada to this day.

**Red Umbrella Vigil details:**

Tuesday May 15  
Parliament Grounds, Wellington  
Vigil: 12-2pm  
MPs greet vigil: 1pm

**Contacts**

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Or, for more information on the Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill contact Amy Adams, legal advisor to the New Zealand Health Trust, phone: (03) 353 5774 or 021 499 066