

## Media Release

13 December 2013

### CHC Urges NHMRC to Recognise the Value of Complementary Medicines

The Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) commends the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for establishing the Research Translation Faculty, intended to identify gaps between existing research evidence and health policy and practice in the major health issues outlined in the NHMRC's Strategic Plan 2013-15.

Chief Executive Officer of the CHC, Mr Carl Gibson stated, "to date, the contribution that complementary medicines can make to individual and community health in Australia has failed to be recognised by Government and failed to be included in health policy and practice."

"While the Research Translation Faculty is an initiative that has the potential to accelerate translation of evidence into improved health, it is somewhat concerning that the NHMRC has chosen to entitle the Steering Group that will consider, among other things, allied health practices such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, sport and exercise science and complementary medicines '*Claim benefits for human health not based on evidence*'".

"Over the last twenty years, there has been a growing body of scientific knowledge on the efficacy of complementary medicines, and recent economic analyses suggest robust links between several of the more well-known complementary medicine products with major potential cost savings across several chronic conditions."<sup>1</sup>

"As just one example, an Access Economics report, '*Cost effectiveness of complementary medicines*' commissioned by the National Institute of Complementary Medicine in 2009, found that the use of St John's wort – which has been found to be similarly effective as taking a standard anti-depressant for mild to moderate depression – could provide costs savings to the Australian health budget. Across the 56% of Australians with mild to moderate depression that are taking medication, a saving of over \$50 million would be possible."<sup>2</sup>

The recently published *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023* highlights the need for Governments to harness the potential contribution that complementary medicines can make through the development of a cohesive and integrative approach, allowing consumers to access complementary medicines in an effective, safe and respectful manner.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2002-2005, Geneva, 2002, p. 2, available from <http://www.who.int/medicines/publications/traditionalpolicy/en/>

<sup>2</sup> Access Economics Pty Ltd, Report for The National Institute of Complementary Medicine, Cost effectiveness of complementary medicines, 2010, piii.

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