



## Summary of Submission by Arthritis Foundation of NZ Inc to Minister of Health and Minister for Senior Citizens

### Freeing up Drugs for people affected by Arthritis Subsidising Cox-2 Inhibitors

We have over 12,000 members of the Arthritis Foundation and there are many, many more New Zealanders who are affected by Arthritis. For most of them, the breakthrough of Cox 2 Inhibitors has been something they've been waiting for for such a long time. And now, even though they're available as a subsidised drug in Australia and in America and UK, most New Zealanders still can't have them because they're too expensive.

It is true that people don't die from Arthritis, but they do suffer greatly and die from the side effects of the drugs they take to relieve Arthritis. About 5,800 people a year are hospitalised because of serious gastric injury from the use of the non-steroidal anti inflammatory drugs that are currently used in the treatment of Arthritis, and about 250 people a year die from the consequences. The hospitalisation costs are over \$8 million.

Because subsidised non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and subsidised gastric protection drugs cost less than Cox-2s would, Pharmac say they are unlikely to add Cox-2s to the Pharmaceutical Schedule.

We are not asking for expensive niche drugs for relatively rare conditions. Market data (quarter 1 2000) shows that out of a total of an estimated 250,000 patients taking NSAIDs at any one time, around 73,000 of them are taking them for Arthritis.

In Australia the drug's cost to consumers has been reduced from around \$60 a month to a maximum of \$3.30 for health card holders and \$20.60 for others. We would like the same in New Zealand.

We're asking that proven and effective drugs be made available to the people who need them who can't afford them. By increasing subsidies on Cox-2s, there will be greater savings elsewhere in other parts of the healthcare budget.

<b>Current costs of NSAIDs to Pharmac</b>	<b>\$3,504,000</b>
<b>Costs to the Health sector from hospitalisations (because of serious gastric injury from the use of NSAIDs)</b>	<b>\$8,000,000</b> -----
<b>current costs to health budget</b>	<b>\$11,504,000</b>
<b>Costs of subsidy of Cox-2s</b>	<b>\$4,380,000</b> -----
<b>Savings to the health sector from the proposed changes</b>	<b>\$7,124,000</b>