



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **Sanitarium Commits to Wholegrain Major boost for the health of Australians**

The Sanitarium Health Food Company today announced a major initiative to improve the health of the nation by becoming the first Australian food manufacturer to commit to a wholegrain breakfast cereal range.

In launching this initiative, Australia's largest health food company has established a stringent new 'Wholegrain Nutrition Standard' for their breakfast cereals that guarantees a minimum of 51% of total ingredients will be wholegrain.

Sanitarium has reformulated a number of breakfast cereals to meet this new standard which means that more than 90% of Sanitarium's breakfast cereal sales are now a rich source of wholegrain.

Other initiatives announced to support Sanitarium's commitment to wholegrain include:

- A guarantee that all new ready to eat bowl breakfast cereals are at least 51% wholegrain
- The creation of a new wholegrain symbol that will appear across its entire wholegrain breakfast cereal range to help easily identify wholegrain cereals
- The launch of a national public education campaign on wholegrain health benefits

Sanitarium is concerned that Australians are not eating enough wholegrains and that they are eating too many highly refined breakfast cereals. The company, based on considerable scientific evidence, believes replacing refined grains with wholegrains is critical for improving health and wellbeing and preventing a range of chronic diseases.

Sanitarium's General Manager, Mr Dean Powrie, said whole plant foods such as wholegrains are an essential part of happy, healthy living. "Sanitarium is the first Australian food company to make such a strong commitment to wholegrain breakfast cereals, which is consistent with our 107-year history," Mr Powrie said.

"Our wholegrain breakfast cereal innovation program is designed to extend our health leadership in cereals and boost the health of our nation. Most of our breakfast cereals - over 90% - are now rich in wholegrain. We will review those few cereals that do not yet meet our strict standards. These products meet all of our other nutritional benchmarks and we will review ways to increase their wholegrain content to further benefit the health of our consumers," he said.

### **The health of Australia**

Healthcare experts believe Australia is facing a looming health crisis with around 60% of Australian adults overweight or obese, 25% suffering from diabetes or impaired glucose metabolism, 15% suffering from heart disease, 51% with high cholesterol, and up to one third will be diagnosed with cancer.

Cathy McDonald, dietitian and manager of the Sanitarium Nutrition Service, said one of the biggest factors in helping control these diseases is to eat more whole plant foods, particularly plenty of wholegrain foods.

“There is a significant body of scientific research which supports a positive role for wholegrains in preventing and even treating these serious diseases,” Mrs McDonald said.

“Wholegrain foods, just like fruits and vegetables, contain a powerful combination of hundreds of naturally-occurring antioxidants, phyto-nutrients, vitamins, minerals, fibre and protein. These work synergistically within the body to promote health and protect against disease. A wholegrain breakfast cereal can have up to three times more of these naturally occurring nutrients than a highly processed breakfast cereal,” she said.

International data shows around 90% of consumers don't eat enough wholegrains as part of their regular diet. Although there are no Australian figures on wholegrain consumption, most experts would agree the situation in Australia is similar.

### **Scientific backing**

Dr Graeme McIntosh, former Senior Research Scientist with CSIRO Human Nutrition, has been researching health related to diet and wholegrains for 30 years and believes wholegrain foods could have a significant impact on Australia's health.

“Scientific evidence from around the world overwhelmingly shows wholegrain foods have a protective effect against several forms of cancer and heart disease, two of the biggest preventable killers in Australia, and can also help prevent obesity and diabetes,” Dr McIntosh said.

“Research suggests the disease-preventing capability of wholegrain foods is due to the combined effect of all of the components of the wholegrain. So, by increasing our wholegrain intake, we should greatly enhance the health of our nation and help prevent a substantial number of premature deaths every year,” he said.

Dr Tim Gill, from the Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity, agrees there is a looming health crisis. “With 25% of Australian children overweight or obese, and this figure growing by almost 1% every year, it's clear we need to be committed to doing something to address these issues,” he said.

“A switch to wholegrains is a simple change that can easily be incorporated into a regular eating pattern. Increasing the proportion of wholegrain cereals in the food supply is an important public health objective for improving the health of Australia,” Dr Gill said.

Sanitarium's heightened commitment to wholegrain breakfast cereals is supported by a range of Australian nutrition experts and healthcare bodies, including the official government dietary guidelines for cereals and wholegrain intake.

Sanitarium's national education initiative encourages consumers to call the Sanitarium Nutrition Service to receive the “*Goodness Of Wholegrains*” kit, or free nutritional advice. Call 1800 673 392 or visit [www.sanitarium.com.au](http://www.sanitarium.com.au)

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- **Broadcast quality B-Roll footage, Breakfast Photographs and Pack Shots** available on request
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