

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE USE



Australian Organic and ACCC unite to win fight against misleading claims GAIA fines a 'watershed moment' for industry

[Brisbane, 21 June 2018] – Australia’s leading organic industry group, Australian Organic, welcomes the ACCC action to impose penalties of \$37,800 on Dreamz Pty Ltd (trading as GAIA Skin Naturals), for ‘misleading consumers’ that some of its products are free from synthetic chemicals ‘when they are not.’ The toiletry items in question are marketed as ‘organic’ to parents for use with babies, yet they contain two synthetic chemical preservatives: sodium hydroxyl methyl glycinate and phenoxyethanol.

“We fully support the ACCC in targeting misleading organic claims and welcome the news that this company has been called to account for its behaviour,” commented Sue Willis, General Manager, Australian Organic.

Marg Will, Secretary of the Organic Industry Standards and Certification Council (OISCC), which maintains the National Standards for Organic and Biodynamic Produce in Australia, said, “Australian Organic should be commended for its work in bringing this case to action. The ACCC decision is the best thing to happen in the organic industry in the last 20 years and represents a watershed moment.”

All certified businesses must follow a stringent auditing process, over several years, run by accredited certification bodies such as Australian Certified Organic, to earn the right to display an organic certification logo on their products and to genuinely claim their product is organic or biodynamic.

“When other companies trade off the value of the term ‘organic’ without being able to validate their claims, it undermines authentic organic products and the hard-won reputation our industry has earned,” Sue said. “We think it’s important for those producers and growers out there who do not play by the rules, to know that Australia’s consumer watch dog will not hesitate to take action against these businesses,” she said.

“As an industry, we need to be able to safeguard the integrity of our organic certification, to remain competitive in the global organics marketplace. We pledge to continue working with the ACCC and all organic certification bodies to put a stop to deceptive marketing like GAIA’s, so that consumers can continue to have confidence in the Bud and other valid certification marks,” she said.

“It’s impossible to quantify exactly but somewhere in the order of 500 million dollars is lost every year because of products falsely claiming to be organic. This affects everyone, from consumers right through to primary producers,” Marg Will said.

-- ENDS --

About Australian Organic Ltd. (AO)

Australian Organic has played a major role in the organic industry since 1987. It is Australia's member owned, not-for-profit, industry services group. The Australian Organic Market Report is a highly respected annual publication commissioned by Australian Organic Limited that tracks trends in the Australian organic marketplace. This year’s report incorporates independent research by University of New England, Nielsen Research and Mobium Group. www.austorganic.com

ACCC media release:

<https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/accc-targets-misleading-organic-claims>

MEDIA:

Rhiannon Christie: Communications & Marketing Manager, Australian Organic
M 0488 006 522 | P 07 3350 5716 | Rhiannon.Christie@austorganic.com

Rachel Harris: The 6AM Agency on behalf of Australian Organic
M 0498 140 433 | 02 9369 5544 | rachel.harris@the6amagency.com.au