



## THORPEDO MAKES WAVES IN JAPAN

Tokyo: Tuesday, 20 June 2006

In partnership with Yakult, Japan's best known functional beverage company, leading swimming star Ian Thorpe has introduced Thorpedo branded low GI drinks to the Japanese public.

The launch follows the establishment in December 2005 of a strategic partnership between Yakult Honsha (Yakult) and Thorpedo Foods Pty Ltd (Thorpedo), a company jointly owned by So Natural Foods Australia Ltd (ASX code: SNF) and Ian Thorpe.

Yakult has made the Thorpedo product its key innovation for 2006 and has placed substantial marketing support behind the new brand. It is targeting sales of three and a half million cases of Thorpedo in its first year.

The product is now available via a direct sales force of approximately 50,000 'Yakult Ladies', 100,000 vending machines, supermarkets, bakeries, confectionaries and convenience stores, including shops in train stations throughout Japan.

Yakult is supporting the launch with TV, poster and print advertising, sampling and point of sale material all of which highlight Ian Thorpe's involvement. Last weekend, Ian completed an intensive promotional schedule for the new product which included appearances on some of Japan's highest rating TV shows.

Yakult, which is an official partner of FINA, swimming's international governing body, has also decided to include the FINA logo on Thorpedo drinks and the "Thorpedo" brand will figure prominently at various international swimming competitions, commencing with the Synchronised Swimming World Championships in Yokohama in September 2006 and the World Swimming Championships which will be held in Melbourne in March 2007.

Yakult's Thorpedo Brand Manager, Mr. Kiyoshi Hirano said that initial retail trade and consumer reaction to Thorpedo was highly positive.

"We're very pleased with the market's response to Thorpedo. Ian's promotional activity in the last week is very important in terms of increasing product and brand awareness.

"Ian is one of the most popular foreign sports stars in Japan and people see Ian as someone who is committed to managing his physical energy and body so he is the perfect embodiment of the Thorpedo brand," said Mr.Hirano.



The Japanese version of Thorpedo was developed cooperatively by Yakult and Ian Thorpe based on the knowledge and experience Ian has gained from competitive lifestyle and body management and builds on the knowledge gained from developing the Thorpedo brand in Australia. The Japanese beverage embodies the same low GI concept as the Australian product.

Mr. Thorpe said that Yakult was the ideal partner for Thorpedo drinks.

“Yakult’s commitment to products that support healthy living is a perfect fit for us.

“Their scale has enabled us to achieve widespread national distribution in a very quick timeframe. Yakult has given Thorpedo an excellent launch pad and it augurs very well for our future partnership,” said Mr. Thorpe.

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## About Yakult

Yakult marked its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005. Its founder, Dr. Minoru Shirota, succeeded in strengthening and culturing a very powerful bacterium, the *Lactobacillus Casei* strain. This bacterium, which is immune to the effects of gastric juices and bile, reaches the intestines alive and has various functions that have a positive impact on health. This discovery led to the creation of the Yakult beverage and still lies at the core of Yakult's domestic and global success.

Yakult embarked on a major international expansion programme in the 1990s and its core beverage is now widely available in 26 countries and geographies including Australia, USA, China, Korea, Europe, South East Asia and South America.

To the year ended March 2006, Yakult reported net sales of around US\$2.3 billion.

In Japan, delivery of Yakult products is via a direct sales force of approximately 50,000 'Yakult Ladies' based out of 2,700 marketing offices, located throughout the country. In addition to in-home consumption, Yakult endeavours to have its products available at all times in a wide variety of places, such as factories, offices, and other places of business; leisure facilities and hospitals; and transportation facilities. Yakult is widely available through supermarkets, and a range of small retailers including confectionaries, bakeries and train station shops.

Yakult also owns approximately 80,000 vending machines throughout Japan and in 2003 it reached a distribution agreement for sales of Yakult in vending machines owned by the Kirin Beverage Corporation. In June 2005, this agreement between Kirin and Yakult was strengthened and extended under a memorandum of agreement to form a business alliance within Japan to use jointly their research and manufacturing capabilities to build the next generation of health and functional foods.

## Thorpedo Foods

Thorpedo Foods was formed in February 2004 as a joint venture business between So Natural and Ian Thorpe to focus on innovative functional food & beverage products for mainstream consumer markets.

Thorpedo Foods has long term use of Ian Thorpe, associated trade marks and intellectual property in the development of food & beverage and seafood products in Japan and other global markets.

## So Natural Foods

So Natural Foods is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and is focused on building a leading position in functional and nutritional foods. The company was formed in 1984 and is headquartered in Sydney.



So Natural is Australia's largest manufacturer of whole bean soy beverages and in 2003 entered the canned seafood market with the acquisition of leading canned salmon and tuna business, Paramount Foods. In 2005, it also acquired the Brunswick seafood brand in Australia.

Brands under the So Natural banner now include Paramount, Brunswick, Thorpedo, So Natural Soy and Rice, Australia's Own organic soy milk and Freedom Foods healthy snackfoods and cereals.

So Natural has formed a strategic relationship with Bumble Bee Seafoods. Bumble Bee is the world's largest full line canned seafood group with market leading positions in the USA and Canada. So Natural's exclusive alliance provides for Bumble Bee to facilitate seafood product sourcing, quality assurance and new product development.