



THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE
OF DERMATOLOGISTS

MEDIA RELEASE

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UNDER COVER RESEARCH FINDS SOLARIUM INDUSTRY FALLING SHORT OF PROTECTING THEIR CLIENTS

The Cancer Council Victoria today released alarming research findings showing that many solariums in Melbourne are not adhering to the Australian and New Zealand Standard on Solaria for Cosmetic Purposes; established to protect Australian skins.

The Cancer Council Victoria sent in underage and fair skinned 'customers' to 30 solarium centres throughout Melbourne, in an effort to determine their level of compliance with the voluntary Standard.

The Standard requires customers under the age of 18 to provide parental consent and anyone under 15 years to be banned from using a solarium.

The study found 52% of 16 year olds could gain access to solariums without having to produce parental consent.

Julie Hassard, SunSmart Program Manager said, "A solarium can emit UV radiation that is five times as strong as the midday summer sun. Subjecting young people's skin to the excessive amounts of UV radiation that solariums emit can be dangerous. It is important that the public understand that solariums will increase the risk of skin cancer."

"This research confirms our fears that many solarium operators are disregarding the current voluntary solarium Standard."

The Standard was established to protect customers and is based on evidence. Research shows that the more exposure children and adolescents have to UV radiation, the greater their risk of skin cancer later in life.

Ms Hassard said, "We have seen a 600% increase in the number of solariums in Melbourne over the past 10 years. The solarium industry continues to use persuasive marketing methods, such as unlimited sessions and discounted prices, to lure the youth market."

The research found that 90% of very fair skinned customers could gain access to solariums, despite the fact that the Standard bans people with fair skin.

"Redheads, and people with very fair skin will never tan, as their skin is not capable of turning brown. Their skin is more sensitive to UV radiation. It's frightening to think that solarium operators overlook this danger for the sake of a sale."

"Solarium operators have an obligation to protect their customers. This research shows that many solarium operators are neglecting their responsibility."

Of particular concern are the unsupervised solariums that are coin operated, or those found in Health and Fitness centres without trained staff. Ms Hassard said, "We would like all unsupervised and coin-operated solariums to be closed down immediately. These solariums provide very easy access with little or no prior information or guidance for customers."

Associate Professor John Kelly, spokesperson for the Australasian College of Dermatologists and Director of the Victorian Melanoma Service at the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, was not surprised by the findings and sent a strong warning to those thinking about using a solarium this spring.

"We have the world's worst skin cancer epidemic and if we do nothing to minimise the risk of excessive UV exposure to our youth, skin cancer rates will continue to rise." We are seeing young Australians presenting with melanomas and some can be linked to solarium light exposure over the previous few years. These melanomas are potentially life-threatening. Many young Australians risk dying for a tan ."

"I would like to see all commercial solariums that do not comply with the Standard closed down as they are subjecting far too many young people and fair skinned Australians to deadly levels of UV radiation."

"People must understand that deliberately exposing themselves to solarium UV radiation is the same if not worse than lying out in the midday summer sun - it will increase their risk of developing skin cancer – they are not a safe alternative."

"Skin cancer is a preventable disease and I am seeing far too many young people who are now regretting their actions " Assoc. Prof Kelly said.

When reflecting on the outcomes of the report Ms Hassard said, "We are working with the State government who support the notion of regulation, but this won't happen overnight."

"The Standard for the solarium industry is in place to protect people from the dangers. For their own peace of mind, parents should understand the risks before allowing their children to use solariums, even for 'special occasions'."

"All potential customers must be fully informed before deciding whether to subject themselves to deliberate UV radiation. For more information people should go to www.sunsmart.com.au or contact the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20." Ms Hassard said.

Available for interview:

Julie Hassard – SunSmart Program Manager
Associate Professor John Kelly

For more information or to arrange an interview contact:

Kirsten Pilatti
Media and Communications on mobile: 0419 552 719

