



The Australasian College of Dermatologists

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MEDIA RELEASE

SKIN CANCER EXPERTS AND VICTIM URGE PUBLIC TO UNDERSTAND SOLARIUM RISKS

'Don't be fooled into thinking solariums are safe'—that was the message from SunSmart, the Australasian College of Dermatologists and skin cancer victim, Anna Burgess, today.

Young actor, model and current dancer in *The Producers*, Anna Burgess spoke about the wake up call she received when she was diagnosed with skin cancer at just 23 years of age.

"I felt the pressure of having to have a tan, and thought visiting a solarium was a quick and easy method. I had no idea of the real dangers of going to the solarium."

"I never really lay on the beach to get a tan but I have been going to a solarium at least once a week for a couple of years now."

Anna was diagnosed with skin cancer late last year. "I thought it was a cancer for old people. When Professor Kelly told me that the biopsy had come back and I had a skin cancer that had to be removed, I was shocked and devastated." Anna said.

"The surgery to remove the cancer happened pretty quickly. The scar on my stomach will remind me for the rest of my life of what solariums can do."

"I would never visit a solarium again, now the idea of going in there really scares me—besides my Mum would kill me."

"I want to say to anyone out there who is thinking about or who currently uses solariums - make sure you fully understand the dangers. Skin cancer has happened to me and it could just as easily happen to you." Anna said.

Spokesperson for the Australasian College of Dermatologists and Director of the Victorian Melanoma Service at the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Professor John Kelly said, "Anna is just one patient that I have treated. There are a significant number of melanomas that I have seen developing in young solarium users."

"Inevitably some of these will lead to a sad and very premature death from skin cancer. Few solarium users that I meet understand this cruel reality. If they really understood the risk to themselves and the potential impact on those that they love, few would still do it."

"It is bizarre and alarming that the second most common life threatening cancer in Victorians between 15 and 59 years of age, is self inflicted and is being promoted for commercial gain by solarium operators."

"Anna was diagnosed with a skin cancer, that is a direct result of UV radiation. Given the number of solarium visits she has had in recent years, there is little doubt that this caused her squamous cell carcinoma. This form of skin cancer kills over 300 Australians a year. If not detected Anna's outcome could have been a lot more serious."

“The public is not getting the right information from the solarium industry. They should be operating responsibly and protecting the health of their customers. By the time customers have worked out the dangers they have caused permanent damage to their skin.” Prof Kelly said.

Victoria has seen a solarium industry boom since 1992. Research has found that the number of solarium outlets in the metropolitan area has increased by around 600 percent.

SunSmart program Manager, Julie Hassard said, “Research on the solarium industry’s compliance with the Australian Standard on Solaria for Cosmetic Purposes, undertaken by the Cancer Council last year, clarified that the industry is neglecting its duty to protect customers from the dangers of solariums.”

“Solariums emit UV radiation up to five times stronger than the midday summer sun, yet our research shows that many people are not being warned about the possible dangers to their skin and their health”

Of particular concern to the Cancer Council was the easy access to solariums by those who shouldn’t be allowed to visit. The research found that 52% of 16 year olds were welcomed by solariums without providing the required parental consent.

“We know that exposing young skin to UV rays increases the risk of skin cancer. That’s why the Standard calls for parental consent for 15 – 17 year olds. Allowing such young vulnerable skin into solariums without any consideration for their safety is simply not acceptable to us.” Ms Hassard said.

“There are also many ‘self serve’ style solariums, mostly in fitness centres, without trained staff who should assess skin types, ask for parent consent and ensure the safety of their customers. The Standard was put in place to protect consumers. Solarium owners and operators that do not follow the Standard, are putting clients at risk of a cancer that can be life threatening.”

Ms Hassard finished the press conference with a strong message for the public to consider the dangers before using a solarium she said, “Don’t be fooled into thinking a solarium is safe.”

For more information on the risks of solariums visit www.sunsmart.com.au.

If you or someone you love is affected by cancer call the Cancer Helpline on 13 11 20, to find out about the range of supports available.

Available for interview

Professor John Kelly - Dermatologist

Anna Burgess – skin cancer patient

Julie Hassard – SunSmart Program Manager

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