



Cancer Society of New Zealand
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Media release
20 January 2007

SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

In a recent submission, the Cancer Society of New Zealand has asked that the Department of Labour consider adding skin cancer and eye disease due to excessive ultraviolet radiation as further occupational diseases in the current review of the Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Compensation Act 2001.

Dr Judith Galtry, the Cancer Society's Skin Cancer Prevention Advisor, notes that "Diseases of the skin and eye related to excess exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) should be added to the occupational diseases covered by the Act because there is extensive evidence linking excessive UVR exposure to skin cancer and eye disease".

She also notes that skin cancer is by far the most common form of cancer affecting New Zealanders, with our incidence and mortality rates among the highest in the world. There are approximately 1,800 new melanoma cases, with another 45,000 – 70,000 new non-melanoma skin cancer cases every year. Around 300 New Zealanders also die from skin cancer each year.

Skin cancer is also one of New Zealand's most costly cancers, conservatively estimated at \$33M every year.

Outdoor workers are at increased risk of developing skin cancer, in particular, non-melanoma skin cancers, because of their prolonged, cumulative sun exposure. They often spend long periods working outside during periods of peak ultraviolet radiation (i.e. between October and March, especially between the hours of 11 am and 4 pm).

Because New Zealand, like Australia, has especially high levels of UV radiation during the daylight savings months, it is important that employers of outdoor workers have a sun protection policy in place and workers are provided with the necessary protective equipment. The Society's website www.cancernz.org.nz has information on sun protection for the outdoor workforce.

Galtry notes that outdoor workers nevertheless often have less control than the general population regarding UVR exposure levels as the nature of their work requires that they be outdoors. While exposure to UVR can be minimized through appropriate workplace policies and practices, the sun cannot be controlled in the same way as other workplace exposure hazards. Because skin cancer is a significant occupational risk for outdoor workers in New Zealand, the Society claims it is important that the extent of occupational risk is acknowledged in any review of occupational diseases under the Act.

View Submission

http://www.cancernz.org.nz/Uploads/Submission_Dept_Labour_%20ACC.pdf

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