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## **RULING ON SUNSCREEN CLAIMS AFTER TWO YEAR INVESTIGATION**

The Cancer Society is pleased that a two year investigation by the Commerce Commission into product claims made by some sunscreen manufacturers is finally over. Equally, the Society is not surprised that 50% of the products did not measure up!

The Commission reported serious concerns, based on the testing undertaken, about the sunscreen products which did do not provide the protection claimed. In a media release Commission Chair, Paula Rebstock, said that consumers must be able to rely on the representations made in advertising and packaging as there are potentially important health consequences for consumers if they are misled about the level of protection they can expect in New Zealand conditions from sunscreen products.

Cancer Society spokesperson on sunscreen products, Catherine Chittenden said, "if New Zealand had robust legislation governing sunscreens, such as the mandatory conditions that apply in Australia, these products would not have been allowed on the shelves in the first place, making such claims. The labelling raises false expectations of the safety that can be gained from these products"

All sunscreens in Australia must meet mandatory standards fixed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) – standards the Cancer Society of New Zealand's sunscreen products comply with voluntarily.

"Here in New Zealand sunscreens are treated as 'cosmetics' which is ridiculous," Ms Chittenden says. "Any product which people use in good faith to help prevent life threatening conditions such as melanoma and other skin cancers should not be regarded as a 'cosmetic'."

She says people are confused by varying claims manufacturers make about what their sunscreens can do.

"The products we lodged a complaint about maintained that one application in the morning would provide all-day protection. " We believe there is no product that can make it safe to spend the whole day out in the harsh summer sun of New Zealand under real life conditions. Skin cancer kills some 300 New Zealanders each year.

"The problem with laboratory testing is that it does not take into account human behaviour. People run, play and towel themselves dry after swimming, causing sunscreen to rub off. In many cases people only apply 1/3 – 1/2 of the sunscreen they need to get the protection offered on the label. Adequate amounts of sunscreen need to be reapplied or 'topped up' regularly throughout the day.

The Cancer Society lodged its complaint with the Commerce Commission in December 2005 along with SunSmart partner HSC (Health Sponsorship Council) describing the claims as "scary" and "dangerous".

While the Cancer society says a broad spectrum 30+ SPF sunscreen offers the best protection, sunscreen on its own is not enough.

"Sunscreen is simply an important part of a sensible approach to enjoying outdoor living which includes wearing protective clothing, a hat, sunglasses, keeping in the shade whenever possible and avoiding the hottest part of the day outdoors between 11am and 4pm," Ms Chittenden says.

**...ends**

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