



**Cancer Society New Zealand
Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Sunbed legislation - New Zealand government needs to act now!

The New Zealand government is now clearly lagging behind many other countries with regard to regulating the sunbed industry. England and Wales have joined Scotland and a long list of countries with legislation controlling the operation of sunbeds.

The Cancer Society calls on the New Zealand government to follow international trends and adopt legislation banning sunbed use among young people and those with fair skin.

A law banning people under 18 years from using sunbeds in England and Wales was passed this week. The legislation, which was backed by a wide range of professional organisations and health bodies, including the British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK, and the British Association of Dermatologists, will bring England and Wales into line with Scotland, where a ban on under 18s has already been accepted. The regulations on the use and management of sunbeds in the United States also look set to be tightened following the deliberations of an FDA advisory panel last month.

Dr Judith Galtry, the Cancer Society's Skin Cancer Advisor, notes that "in New Zealand, by contrast, there are currently no controls on the sunbed industry to ban the use by young people (under 18) and by people with fair skin."

'The joint Australian/New Zealand Solaria Standard 2008 stipulates that New Zealand sunbed operators should not allow people under 18 and those with fair skin to use sunbeds, but the problem is this is not a mandatory requirement. Also of concern, Consumer investigations have shown that, in most cases, the New Zealand sunbed operators are not complying with the provisions of the voluntary standard. An Otago University study shows the proliferation of sunbed outlets throughout New Zealand in recent years," she added.

Reinforcing the Society's concern, new research from NIWA suggests that sunbeds may pose a danger to human health. Preliminary results from the study were presented at the NIWA UV Workshop in Queenstown between 7 and 9 April.

According to Dr Richard McKenzie, lead researcher on the NIWA study, "disturbingly, the intensity of radiation at some wavelengths from the sunbeds studied was several times higher than ever occurs in

sunlight. The action spectra of sunbeds also don't match those of natural sunlight. By using these sunbeds, we expose ourselves to unknown risks. Our skins may not be able to cope well with this sort of stress."

At NIWA's workshop, Craig Sinclair, World Health Organisation's Advisor on sunbed regulations, noted that "the New Zealand government is now clearly lagging behind many other countries that have far lower skin cancer rates than us. While the NZ government has refused to implement any controls, at the other end of the spectrum there are countries like Brazil that have introduced an outright ban on sunbed use." He stresses that given New Zealand's high melanoma incidence rate this issue needs to be urgently addressed by the Government through adoption of regulations, as has also occurred in almost all Australian States.

Supporting the call for regulations to control the New Zealand sunbed industry, last year the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) included sunbeds among the highest risk carcinogens or cancer causing agents, alongside tobacco, arsenic and asbestos. IARC studies also highlighted that if sunbed usage starts before age 30 the risk of melanoma is increased by 75 percent.

The New Zealand Dermatological Society supports the Cancer Society's call for the Government to act quickly to introduce mandatory controls on the industry.

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