



National Office  
PO Box 12700  
Wellington 6011

Telephone: 64 4 494-7270  
Facsimile: 64 4 494-7271

Websites: [www.cancernz.org.nz](http://www.cancernz.org.nz)  
[www.daffodilday.org.nz](http://www.daffodilday.org.nz)  
[www.relayforlife.org.nz](http://www.relayforlife.org.nz)  
Email: [admin@cancer.org.nz](mailto:admin@cancer.org.nz)

## MEDIA RELEASE

13 December 2010

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 13 DECEMBER 2010**

### **New Zealand sunbed operators under the lamp!**

Since 2005 Consumer NZ has carried out four mystery-shopper surveys on sunbed operations. The latest, carried out in September 2010, shows a pitifully small improvement on past findings, which comes as no surprise to Dr Judith Galtry, the Cancer Society's Skin Cancer Advisor.

"Unfortunately New Zealand has a *voluntary* standard for sunbed operators. It includes informing clients about the dangers of UV radiation and providing goggles for eye protection. It also requires that sunbed operators say "no" to high-risk groups - especially people with very fair skin, and those under the age of 18.

"A voluntary standard simply isn't legally enforceable. It's up to the sunbed operators to comply with it and the latest Consumer survey has found yet again that the majority of operators don't! How many more such surveys do we need before the Government acts to regulate the sunbed industry and requires operators to be licensed as is now the case in most Australian states, as well as in many other countries with UVR levels that are far lower than our own?"

Consumer researchers visited 69 sunbed outlets in 13 centres - including solarium (specialist sunbed establishments), fitness centres, hairdressers, beauty therapists and nail salons. Only seven met all the criteria of the voluntary standard Consumer was evaluating against.

Recent research by the National Institute of Water & Atmospheric Research (NIWA) looked at UVR levels of New Zealand sunbeds, as measured by the Ultraviolet Index. It found levels were high to extreme, with the intensity of radiation at some wavelengths being several times higher than ever occurs naturally in midday summer sunlight. NIWA scientist Dr Richard McKenzie cautioned that people using sunbeds were exposed to unknown risks.

Last year the International Agency for Research on Cancer - which is part of the World Health Organization (WHO) - called on all governments to regulate sunbed use. They say even one sunbed session before the age of 35 increases the melanoma risk by 75 percent and reclassified sunbeds as a 'group 1' carcinogen (the same category as cigarettes).

“We know that young people, especially young women, use solariums more and that harmful exposure in adolescence increases the risk of melanoma in later life. Melanoma was the third most common cancer for women under 25 in 2007, the year for which the latest melanoma statistics are available. New Zealand has the dubious distinction of having the highest melanoma incidence rate in the world so it’s high time the government took notice and regulated sunbeds. A number of countries already have controls to manage the health risks associated with their operation.”

Other organisations that back the call for mandatory regulation for the industry include the New Zealand Dermatological Society, the Melanoma Network of NZ (MelNet), the Melanoma Foundation of New Zealand and Cancer Control New Zealand.

For more information:

Dr Judith Galtry

Tel: (04) 494 7196 Mobile: 0274 583 484

Email: [judith.galtry@cancer.org.nz](mailto:judith.galtry@cancer.org.nz)



## Voluntary Standards versus practice

### Skin assessment

Staff should do a formal assessment of a customer’s skin.  
Only 24 operators out of 69 gave a formal skin assessment.

### Customers should be given a consent form to read and sign

Only 27 operators did this.

### Eye protection

Most operators provided adequate goggles that formed a tight seal around the eyes.

### Follow-up session

The standard recommends that a follow-up session be avoided for the next 48 hours.  
Nearly three-quarters of the operators explained this.

### Warning notices

The standard asks for warning notices in the sunbed cubicle. These are meant to specify the risks of exposure to UV and also warn specific groups of people about their higher risk. There should also be warnings about the importance of eye protection and the timing of the next session.  
Only 18 operators had all the warnings recommended in the standard.